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DEBORAH

A TALE OF THE TIMES
of
JUDAS MACCABAEUS
by

JAMES M. LUDLOW

AUTHOR OF
THE CAPTAIN OF THE JANIZARIES
ETC

NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

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DEBORAH

I

THE CITY OF PRIDE

ING ANTIOCHUS, self-styled Epiphanes, the Glorious, was in a humor that ill-suited that title. He cursed his scribe who had just read to him a letter, kicked away the cushions where his royal and gouty feet had been resting, and strode about the chamber declaring that, by all the gods! he would make such a show in Antioch that the whole world would be agog with amazement.

The letter which exploded the temper of his majesty was from Philippi, in Macedonia, and told how the Romans, those insolent republicans of the West, had made a magnificent fête to commemorate their conquest of the country of Perseus, the last of the kings of Greece.

Epiphanes was a compound of pusillanimity and conceit. He could forget the insult offered by a Roman officer who drew about "The Glorious" a circle in the sand, and threatened to thrash the kingship out of him if he did not at once desist from a certain attempt upon Egypt; but he could not endure that another should outshine him in the pomp for which Antioch was famous. This Eagle of Syria, as he liked to be called, would rather have his talons cut than lose any of his plumage.

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Hence that great oath of the king. So loud and ominous was it that the pet jackanapes sprang to the shoulder of the statue of the Syrian Venus, and clung with his hairy arms about her marble neck. The giant guardsmen in the adjacent court, who, half asleep, stood leaning upon their pikes, were startled into spasmodic motion, and shouldered their weapons, before their contemptuous glances showed that they understood the words that rang out to them.

"By all the gods! if Rome has the power, and Alexandria the commerce, Antioch shall be queen in splendor, though it takes all the gold of all the provinces to dress her."

The scribe smiled blandly and bowed his appreciation of this new-coming glory of his master. The jackanapes took heart, and, after annihilating some of his own personal enemies with vigorous scratching of his haunches, leaped from the statue to the arm of the King's chair. So the grand pageant was ordered.

All the world was invited to the Syrian capital. For an entire month such splendors and sports were seen at Daphne, the famous pleasure-grounds near to Antioch, that ever after the capital was called Epidaphne, the City by the Grove. The heights of Silpius, on whose lower slope Antioch lay like a jewel in the lap of a queen, blazed by day with a thousand banners, and at night with fires whose reflection turned the Orontes that flowed below the city into a stream of molten gold.

One day was devoted to military display. There were fifty thousand soldiers of many nations, from the perfectly formed Greek of the Peloponnesus to the Persian, who made up for his lack of muscle by

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the superior glitter of his spear, and the lithe and swarthy Arabs from all the deserts between the Ægean and the Euphrates. Plumes of gold nodded above shields of bronze and silver. Hundreds of chariots glowed like rainbows in their parti-colored enamel, and were drawn by horses buckled and bossed with precious gems. Droves of elephants armored in dazzling steel carried upon their backs howdahs like thrones.

A stalwart young Greek stood looking at this martial display. He wore the chiton, or under-garment, cut short above the knees, and belted at the loins, where hung a stout sword indicating that he too was a soldier.

"What think you, Dion?" asked a comrade.

"Why, that the body-guard of our King Perseus, though numbering but three thousand, could have annihilated this whole mongrel horde as readily as Alexander did the million when he won this land for his degenerate successors. But I must not criticise the service I am enrolled to enter."

Following the soldiery in the procession came a thousand young men, each wearing a crown of seeming gold, clad in glistening white silk, and holding aloft a huge tusk of ivory. These symboled the trade wealth of Syria.

But the army having passed by, the Greek was soon wearied with the rest of the display; and, bidding his companion farewell, with a few sage suggestions about the temptations of the Grove at night, such as one young fellow might give another, went into the city.

The second day's festivities were of a less valiant, though not less fascinating sort. It was the Day of

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Beauty. Hundreds of fair women, in balconies that overhung the narrow streets of the city, or grouped upon platforms here and there throughout the Grove, flung into the air the dust of sandalwood and other spiceries, or sprinkled the crowds with drops of aromatic ointments. At the crossing of the paths were great vessels of nard and cinnamon and oils, scented with marjoram and lily, that even the paupers might delight themselves with the perfume of princes. Tanks of wine and tables spread with viands were as free as they were costly.

But the King himself was the most extravagant provision of the show. In him the dignity of a king was less than the vanity of the man: his coxcomb more than his crown. It cut him to the quick that a courtier should outdress him, a charioteer better manage his steeds, or a fakir set the mouths of the crowd more widely gaping. In the military procession yesterday he had sat between the tusks of an enormous elephant, and pricked the brute's trunk with a golden prod. He had also ridden a famous stallion,—tightly curbed, it is true, and flanked by six athletic grooms.

His majesty's originality was especially shown on the Day of Beauty by his riding beside Clarissa, the famous dancer, in the chariot where she reclined as Queen of the Grove, an apparition of Astarte herself. The extemporized divinity of love wore a moon-shaped tiara of silver, the symbol of the Queen of Heaven; Epiphanes put on an aureole of gold to represent the glory of the Sun. A score of women whose forms were familiar to all the frequenters of the dancing gardens of Daphne lay at their feet.

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Dion was an onlooker. He had caught so much of the spirit of the day as to curl his locks and drape a purple himation or outer cloak from his left shoulder.

"That's the Macedonian," said one of Clarissa's satellites, as from her float she spied the graceful form in the crowd.

"A perfect Apollo!" was the critical response, which drew a jealous glance from even The Glorious, who made the unkingly comment:

"No. His nose isn't true. Has the snout of a Jew."

His Majesty deserved to hear, though he did not, the comment the Greek was at the same moment making to his comrade:

"Humph! Epiphanes, the Glorious! Well do the people call him Epimanes, the Fool."

Captain Dion, notwithstanding the contemptuous sentiments thus far awakened by the great show, was an observer the day following; for the spectacular greatness of the affair would have drawn a Diogenes into the crowd.

This was All-Gods Day. The various deities of the nations which Epiphanes' fathers had conquered for him, and those of lands which the ambitious monarch claimed, though he had not yet subdued them, —these were represented by their statues, or by living personages who were apparelled in celestial hues; that is, so far as the King's costumers were acquainted with the fashions of the world beyond the clouds.

One float bore a tableau in which Mount Olympus appeared, peopled with divinities, among whom Jupiter sat with uplifted hand holding a sheaf of

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golden spears for lightning bolts, which the shaking of the float made to menace the spectators with celestial ire. A bull-headed Moloch of brass was contributed by the adjacent Phœnician city of Sidon; this was followed by a stone Winged Bull from Babylon.

Lesser divinities held their court before the gaping crowds, as if heaven were trailing its banners beneath the greater glory of the earthly monarch. Indeed, the vanity of Epiphanes did not hesitate to make this monstrous pretension. He was magnificently enthroned, his head canopied by a device in which a golden sun and silvery planets were made to float through fleecy azure. At his feet on a lower platform were priests representing every religion in his wide domain—those of the Phœnician Baal in white robes with fluted skirts slashed diagonally with violet scarfs, their heads covered with close-fitting caps of knitted hair-work, as if of a piece with their black beards; Greek priests with gloomy brows inspecting the entrails of the sacrifice; and naked Bacchantes, crowned with the leaves of the vine.

Among these sacred officials was Menelaos, the High Priest of the Jews, clad in the beauty of the ancient pontificate; his white tunic partly covered with the blue robe; his head surmounted with the flower-shaped turban. Menelaos was not the rightful High Priest of his people. His brother, the sainted Onias, had held that office, until, after long captivity in the prison of Daphne, he was murdered by Menelaos' order, not far from the spot the fratricide was now passing.

As on the previous days, Dion, the Macedonian,

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had his station as a spectator on the raised platform by the splendid gate of Daphne. By his side was a young man. He was of decided Jewish countenance, of slight form, head uncovered except for the silver band which held his artificially curled hair close down upon his forehead—the fashion of Antiochian fops of the time; from his shoulders a yellow himation buckled with an enormous jewel and cornered with purple devices.

"I take it, Glaucon," said Dion, "that you are in feather with the High Priest of your people. If I mistook it not, you gave him a knowing nod, which he would have returned had not his pose at the feet of the King prevented."

"Yes," replied the Jew, "Menelaos and I are good friends. And well we may be, for, next to his own, my family is the noblest in Jerusalem. Menalaos has great influence with the King, and has brought me into much favor in Antioch."

"Such favor you will doubtless need, if reports be true," replied Dion. "They say that General Apollonius has made your city of Jerusalem a butcher's pen. That surely might have been avoided, since Menelaos, and your house—the house of——"

"The house of Elkiah, the Nasi," quickly interjected Glaucon.

The Greek continued: "Since such great families as yours have been induced to accept the lordship of Antioch, why not all others? I fear that Apollonius is given to the wearing of the bones on the outside of his hand."

"Well he may be," replied Glaucon, "for my people are obdurate,—stupidly so. Many of them are crazed with their religious bigotry. For the precept

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of some dead Rabbi they would live in the tombs. They would cut off their flesh rather than part with a traditional hem of the garment. They are so proud that one of them would not marry Astarte herself. But a few of us are wiser. We are going to introduce the Greek customs which are so beautiful and joyous; learn your philosophy; adorn our Temple with your art. Young Jewry hears the call of the Greek civilization, as does all the rest of the world. Old Jewry is soured with its traditions, as milk is from too long standing."

"I am glad that I am not a Jew," replied Dion. "I fear that my love of fight would make me a rebel."

"Not you, Captain Dion," said the Jew, looking with admiration into the Greek's handsome face and his blue eyes, that were as full of frolic as of fire. "You, Dion, could fight for a woman, if she were beautiful; but not for a gray-walled temple, and a lot of psalm-snoring priests."

"Well," replied Dion, "I shall soon have a chance to study your strange people; for I am ordered by the King to join Apollonius. I sail to-morrow on the *Eros*, from the harbor of Seleucia to Joppa."

"Then I am in high luck," replied the Jew enthusiastically, "since I will have you for a fellow-passenger. One night more in Daphne! I assure you that I shall play the true Greek, and fill myself with the best that is left in Antioch, since to-morrow I pay tribute to Neptune. You will join me at sunset, Captain? Celanus' wines are excellent."

"Impossible," replied Dion. "I must keep my legs steady under me, and my brain-pan level, for to-morrow I shall have to take charge of a hundred of

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the most villainous wretches that the King ever got together. And he calls them 'Greek soldiers,' though there isn't a man of them that can tell his race two generations back. A lot of pirates, robbers, mine-slaves, and old wine-skins on legs! Greek soldiers! When Mars turns chambermaid to a stable we Greeks will be such soldiers. But they may be good enough for the work that Apollonius has for them in Jerusalem. Farewell! To-morrow at noon on deck!"

Even a king must sometimes work. So Antiochus, the Glorious, laid aside the trappings of divinity and attended to business. A vast empire, such as he had inherited through several generations from Alexander the Great, needed care. So far as possible the King farmed out the government of the provinces to those who would return the largest revenue, and trouble him least about the method of their gathering it. Yet something was left for even the King to do.

First in the royal interest, after he had returned to his palace, was the report of the chief of the city spies—old Briareus, he fondly called him, since he was as one that had a hundred arms, and a thousand fingers on them, which were in all the private affairs of the inhabitants of the capital. Having satisfied himself with his chief's account, and feeling confident that the royal throat was in no immediate danger of being cut by any of the multitude he was daily outraging, the King turned to less interesting matters, such as the whereabouts of his many armies, their victories and defeats.

"Your tablets, Timon."

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The scribe read:

"Apollonius reports all quiet at Jerusalem. Executed two hundred yesterday."

"Good!" said the King. "Bid him leave not so much as a ghost of a Jew above Hades; and then let him hasten the work in the country to the north. The Jewish peasants are unsubdued. It is not safe for a single company of our troops to go over land to Judea. I have had to send the detachment tomorrow by water down the coast."

"There is the matter of Glaucon, son of the Nasi. You recall your Majesty's promise to spare his property. It was a part of the bargain with Menelaos, the Priest."

"To Hades with the Priest!" cried the King.

"Would it be wise to break with Menelaos?" timidly suggested the scribe.

"You are right, Timon. The High Priest will be convenient in Jerusalem,—like the handle to a blade. Has Menelaos paid up all he promised?"

"Yes; the nine hundred talents are safe."

"Nine hundred talents! That rascal must have robbed the Temple."

"Well, if he did, it will save your Majesty the trouble of finding the hidden coffers. They say that the old King Solomon put his gold into wells as deep as the earth, and that only the High Priest knows where they are."

"A good thought!" said the Glorious, thumping the bald head of the scribe with the royal seal. "Your skull, Timon, is as full of wisdom as a beggar's is of fleas. When Menalaos has gobbled down all the gold there is in Jerusalem, we will open his crop and let out the shekels, as they do corn grains

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from a turkey's gullet. A good thought! But enough of these things. They tire me. Business is for slaves, not for kings. Did you note to-day how the people looked as I appeared in the procession?"

"Your Majesty's glory can but grow upon the multitude. It is like that of a mountain,—of a sunset—of—of the Great Sea when the glowing orb of day with rays like the dishevelled hair——"

"Stop, good Timon; no flattery. You know I never could abide flattery."

"No words could flatter your Majesty." The scribe bowed upon the marble floor, and kissed the feet of his master.

"Now begone," said the King. "Let everything be ready for to-night. Clarissa, the Queen of the Grove, comes with a troop of her dancers."

With a wave of the royal hand the scribe vanished, and instead came the King's costumers and physician; for the body of the Glorious must be reapparelled, and his stomach put in order for feasting.

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II

THE CITY OF DESOLATION

HE streets of Jerusalem in every age have been thronged with the same motley multitude: cool-looking, white-shirted market venders from the stalls; no shirted sweat-hot artisans from the cellar workshops; dyers, designated by their badges of bright-colored threads; tailors, in heraldry of ornamented needles; carpenters, wearing their symbol of square and compass—of which they were as proud as the scribe was of the pen stuck behind his ear; fishermen from Galilee and the coast jostling the fruiterers with great baskets on their heads; bare-legged, dirt-tanned laborers from the fields; half-naked children of either sex, playing with equal carelessness whether they knocked over the piles of fruit and black bread that stood upon the stone pavement, or were themselves knocked over by the sharp hoofs of asses or the spongy feet of camels. These exponents of common, toiling humanity made way for the gay tunic-clad aristocrats of the Upper City of Sion, white-robed priests from the Temple Mount, gray-sheeted women from the Cheesemakers Street, and ladies in black silken garments and caps of coins, who were borne in palanquins from the more fashionable Street of David.

But in the year 167 before our Era all these had disappeared,—as suddenly and completely as the sea-

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mullets and blackfish are driven out of the shallows in the bay of Joppa by an invasion of sharks.

The costumes and speech of the new crowd on the streets were foreign, chiefly those of Greek and Syrian soldiers, with broad-brimmed hats, loose-knit, iron-linked corsage, tight leather leggings, and short, stout cleaver-like swords hanging from their girdles. Here and there one stood stock still, sentinelling his corner of the street, with the point of his sarissa or long spear gleaming ten cubits above his head, while his broad circular shield held abreast made an eddy in the living current as it swept around him. These were the soldiers of Antiochus Epiphanes.

Mingled with them were many foreign civilians, as their dress indicated; merchants whose belts were well filled with gold to purchase what the soldiers might steal; colonists to resettle the lands from which the conquered people were expelled; and hordes of hucksters and harlots who followed the armies of the time as dust clouds come after chariots.

Nor were there wanting in the crowd those whose curved noses contradicted the disguise of their newly cropped hair, and proclaimed them to be renegade Jews: men who preferred to retain their ancestral property by denying the faith of their fathers.

One afternoon the crowd in the Street of David became suddenly congested. Through it a man, venerable with age, was vainly trying to make his way. His long white locks, which curled downward in front of his ears and mingled with the snowy beard upon his bosom, betokened his Jewish race; while the broad fringes of white and hyacinth upon his outer garment designated him as one of the

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Chasidim or Purists, who preferred to part with their blood rather than with their religion. The old patriot made no retort to the jostling and gibes of the crowd, but his deep-set eyes flashed hatred from beneath their shaggy brows, and told of the tragedy in his soul even more eloquently than if his lips had poured forth fiery speech.

"You can't swim up this stream, old man," said a soldier, giving the frail form a twirl that made it face the other way.

"It is the Nasi himself, Chief of the Rabbis," whispered a young Jew in Greek cloak to a soldier. "Herakles club me, if you haven't caught the biggest rat left in the hole. But Apollonius has given protection to the Nasi's house. Be careful."

"Protection to his house! Why then did he come out of it? Fetch him along. Strip him naked, and warm his toad's blood in the new gymnasium."

With this insult the soldier tore the outer garment from the old man's back. The Jew was dazed for the instant by the Greek's audacity, and mumbled within his sunken lips the words of the Prophet: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheek to them that plucked off the hair."

He then raised his eyes heavenward, apparently unconscious of a staggering blow between his shoulders from the flat of a sword. He stood a moment until he had completed the sacred sentence: "For the Lord God shall help me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint."

"'Face like a flint,' does he say? Let's see if it will strike fire like a flint," shouted one, smiting the old patriot on the mouth with the palm of his hand.

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This dastardly deed drew blood which stained his white beard. But it brought a quick retaliation from an unexpected direction; for a blow like that of a catapult fell upon the assailant's head.

"By the thunderbolt of Zeus! that made you see fire," cried a comrade, as the coward reeled into his arms. "Captain Dion's fist is as heavy as the hammer of Hephæstus, the blacksmith of the gods, and makes the sparks fly as well. I'll wager, Ajax, that you saw the sky full of stars, or else your head is harder than an anvil."

By the side of the venerable Jew now stood a young Greek officer. If Hephæstus had need of an assistant blacksmith the shoulders of Dion would have attracted his notice; yet it is doubtful if the goddesses of Olympus would have allowed so graceful a man to be consigned to the celestial workshop. His face, too, was peculiarly attractive. Topped with a brush of light hair and lighted by his blue eyes, it was beautiful, but without a trace of femininity; a blending of dignity, intelligence, courage, and kindly feeling, though the latter quality was just then outglowed by rage.

On his well-curled head was a chaplet of myrtle, for he was returning as victor in the day's sports at the new gymnasium which, as an intended insult to the religious prejudices of the people, the Governor, Apollonius, had recently built against the southern wall of the Temple plaza.

"Bravo, Dion! If you had hit the Theban boxer yesterday like that, they wouldn't have called for another round."

Dion faced the crowd, and with utmost detestation in his voice, exclaimed: "If I had been here

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yesterday, this crew of cowardly knaves had not hanged the babes to their mothers' necks, and thrown them from the walls. Let one of you garlic chewers dare confess any part in that beastly business, and I will heave him over the walls into Gehenna, where other carcasses rot. Who touched those women?"

As Dion looked from face to face his blue eyes flashed like the sword-point of a fencer feeling for an exposed spot in the breast of his antagonist. The challenge was not taken, one venturing to say:

"It was done at the Governor's orders."

"I pronounce that a lie. Who repeats it?" cried Captain Dion.

A fellow-officer suggested that it might have been ordered by Apollonius, since the women had plainly broken the new law and had circumcised their brats.

"Shame on you, comrade!" said Dion. "They were women and mothers, and I would say as much to the King's face."

The old Jew, hearing the reference to the scene which he himself had been compelled the day before to witness, turned boldly to the crowd of Greeks, and, with uplifted hands, repeated this imprecation from one of the Psalms of his people:

"Let your children be fatherless and your wives be widows! Let your children be vagabonds and——"

But Dion's hand was firmly laid upon the speaker's mouth.

"Nay, hold your breath, old man. If you give us much of it that way, this crowd will take the rest of it with the hangman's rope."

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Dion gently took the Jew's arm. "You must go back to your house. Come, I will see you safely within doors, if you will stay there."

"No, I will go to the house of the Lord, and worship, for it is the ninth hour," replied the determined man.

"That you cannot do," said Dion, kindly. "Don't you see that the Temple gate is burned, and that soldiers are guarding the opening? Your worship is no longer permitted there. Your sort of priests are all gone."

"Then," said the patriot, "I will be my own priest. Surely the Lord will accept an old man's last worship on earth before he goes hence."

"Nay, my good man, but the priests of the new religion are at the Temple. To-morrow they celebrate the feast of Bacchus. If you go there, they will crown you with ivy, and make you drunk in honor of the god. You must go home, and stay within doors."

"Then let me go—to my own house! My God! Why was it not my sepulchre ere I saw what the Prophet foretold?"

Captain Dion led him safely along the Street of David, the crowd giving way as it gazed upon the two and remarked the contrast between the half-mummied saint and the strong-limbed, festive-crowned youth.

"Old Elkiah is about the last of this damnable race left in Jerusalem. It is a wonder that Apollonius has given him tether so long."

"Perhaps Dion knows the Jew," responded some one. "The captain is as good a Greek as ever drew sword or loved a woman, but his nose isn't straight

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on a line with his forehead. See, it has a Jewish twist."

"A fine observation," laughed another, "for one always follows his nose, and that may account for Dion's kindness to some of these rebels."

"Don't insult Captain Dion!" said one. "He's close in with Apollonius. Besides, he's a good fellow. He always gives a weaker man his handicap in the arena without having it ordered."

"True, or you would not have won yesterday. But I wish he wouldn't interfere with the sport of the men. I know that it is cruel, but the sooner the bigots are exterminated the sooner it will cease. Were it not for Dion's friendship for that Glaucon—as Elkiah's fool of a son now calls himself—we would soon find out what the old Jew's house has for us. They say his cellar is as good as a gold-mine."

"Better kill off Glaucon, and let the old man die himself. You saw that his life is about burned out, and his old body only like a heap of ashes with a spark in it," was the humane response.

Dion paused by the oaken door in the wall of the Jew's house. He took from a little pouch at his belt a pinch of aromatic sawdust of sandalwood, and dropped it upon a small square altar whose brazier emitted a thin curl of white smoke, clouding the entrance. This was an altar to Zeus which the Governor had commanded to be placed at all the houses which were still occupied by the Jews. Just above the altar the lintel had been torn by the destruction of the Mezuzah or wooden box which, according to the Hebrew custom, contained the sacred sentences from the Law, and through the small apertures in which a visitor to any Jewish home could see the

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word "Shaddai," the Almighty One, and thus make the common salutation, "Peace be to this house," into a prayer. Dion's worship at the little altar by the gate was marred by a muttered curse upon Apollonius for the needless insult perpetrated by this act of sacrilege.

The Greek had scarcely time to knock at the outer entrance when the door flew open, and with the cry "Father!" a young girl's arms were about the old man.

She drew him inside, and stood with her left arm supporting, while she raised her right hand as if it were a shield to protect him.

Captain Dion was familiar with the finest statuary in Athens and Antioch, but thought he had never seen anything to match this,—the white head and beard of age shielded by the raven locks of youth and beauty. He would tell Laertes, his sculptor friend, of this pose.

The girl was apparently about seventeen years of age, tall and lithe, with sufficient muscle to give that exquisite grace which only accompanies strength. Her hair, bound about the temples with a single fillet of silver, fell in wavy profusion of jet black upon a white linen chiton. This was gathered at the shoulders, and left fully exposed a neck which might have illuminated a copy of Solomon's Song. Beneath the breasts the garment was girdled with a rope of golden threads, and thence fell below the knees. Her ankles were wound with long white sandal lacings, which were in harmony with the silver band that bound her brow. Her arms were bare. In her haste she had not put on her outer garment, and thus stood revealed in a more exquisite modelling of

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nature than she would have chosen had she known that she was to be beneath so critical an eye. Yet she could not have been more charming had she practised for hours before her mirror of polished brass, and passed her proud old nurse Huldah's inspection before she made her début at the gate.

Dion noted that the girl's features were perfect, but strictly on the Semitic model. Her face might be a hard one, for it well fitted the tragic feeling of the moment; or it might be sweet as any he had loved to dream about, for it also fitted the intensity of filial affection and solicitude she now displayed. The Greek seemed transfixed by her eyes. These were enlarged by her surprise, and their pupils gleamed from their deep black irises with the fire of excitement.

"A Jewish Athena!" thought Dion, as in a brief sentence or two he begged the girl to be more prudent in the care of her father. Surely there was no scorn of the Jewish race in the profound bow with which he took his departure, nor in the hasty glance he stole as the door was closing.

He plucked a leaf from his myrtle crown and dropped it upon the altar. As he went away he sighed a prayer for the maiden, and grumbled another curse upon the King's cruelty. Then he whistled a sort of musical accompaniment to his thought, which ran something like this:

"That girl is Glaucon's sister. He never told me that he had one." He shrugged his shoulders. "Well, in that he was wise, since he only knows me for a Greek adventurer, and thinks my honor like his own, a spur on the heel, to be used or not according to one's inclination. But, by the arm of Aphrodite!

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what a woman! Beautiful as a lioness, and as brave too. Strange that the Jew could be father of both her and Glaucon—of a lioness and a jackal! Glaucon and I must be good friends, though I despise the fool. Why doesn't he fight for his house? I would—especially with that woman in it."

Dion stopped and stood a long time looking at the narrow strip of sky visible between Elkiah's house and those which lined the opposite side of the street. There were no angels in the blue ether; but something prompted him to take from his bosom a piece of onyx enclosed in a casket of gold, and to look at a sweet face cut into the stone.

"I wonder if she was anything like Elkiah's daughter!"

He put the intaglio back into its pocket and went away.

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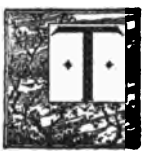
III

THE LITTLE BLIND SEER.



THE house of Elkiah was one of the most stately in Jerusalem, though inferior to the structure which, in more ancient days, rose from the same foundations. Whenever Elkiah told of his ancestral dignities he was apt to show his listeners what were now the cellars and sub-cellars of the house, the great stones of which, by the flat indentations chiselled about the borders, proved that they were as old as the days when Solomon built the Temple, and perhaps wrought by the same Phœnician workmen. The second story, and the battlements which enclosed the roof, were of newer construction, and had evidently been made of the débris of a former and more palatial edifice, for an occasional huge and broidered stone showed upon the street in ancient architectural pride—just as some moderately circumstanced people wear an occasional jewel left them by their richer forebears.

The residence of Elkiah thus maintained a relation to the other and ordinary houses of the city not unlike that which its occupant held to his fellow-citizens. He traced his blood to the days when another Elkiah stood high in the court of Solomon, and thence back to the settlement of the land by the emigrants from Egypt. This could be attested by the official records, and was illustrated by numer-

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ous priceless antiques now stored away in secret closets cut into the solid walls, but which in safer times had ornamented the house from battlement to court.

For many years Elkiah had been the Nasi, or President of the Sanhedrin, that combined ecclesiastical and secular court of seventy-two men who legislated for and judged the people. Of late years the Sanhedrin itself had become utterly debauched by the gold of Egyptian Ptolemies and Syrian Antiochuses, in their rivalry for the possession of Palestine. Most of the members of this sacred council had become Hellenized, and adopted Greek philosophies and customs; and now that the Syrian monarch had invaded the city, these renegades saved themselves from being despoiled by becoming despoilers of their brethren. A former High Priest, Joshua, had changed his name to the Greek Jason, as the Greeks scornfully said, for the sake of the "Golden Fleece." The present incumbent of the sacred office, Menelaos, had been circumcised as Onias, and was now the chief of the traitors in the sacrilegious extinction of the national religion.

The crowning grief of the venerable Elkiah was the apostasy of his own first-born son, Benjamin, who had taken the heathen name of Glaucon, and thus shamed the house of his fathers while he protected it from the general pillage.

The late afternoon of the day following that of Dion's rescue of Elkiah from the mob the old man was reclining upon the thick rug and pillows which Deborah—for so was his fair daughter called—had spread upon the roof. Here he loved to lie, sheltered from view by the parapets, while his eyes fol-

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lowed the white clouds which flecked the deep blue of the sky—"Jehovah's banners," he called them—or caught the gleam of the Temple roof when he was disposed to pray.

"Where is Caleb?" he asked.

A lad of some ten years was lying in the upper chamber, the room which, like a little house by itself, occupied half of the roof upon which it opened. Hearing his father's call, the child sprang up, and in an instant was by Elkiah's side.

"Here am I, father!"

With his long black hair clustering upon his white chiton, and his large black eyes, the boy resembled his sister. One would have noted, however, a strange look; the pupils too widely expanded, as when one tries to see in the dark. And this the child had been doing ever since, five years ago, his sight was destroyed by a strange malady which not even the physician Samuel could cure, for all that this learned man was skilled in the potencies of herbs, the baleful and blessed beams of the stars, and even the deeper mysteries of the words of the Rabbis.

Little Caleb was marvellously beautiful in spite of the stare of his blind eyes and the marble pallor of his face. It was a child's face, yet there was in it the placid sweetness of a woman's look, and at times it seemed to glow with the intelligence of riper years—for the boy had thought and felt more than most men had done.

Caleb knelt down by his father's side, and kissed his forehead. The old man's harsher features relaxed at the touch of the young lips, and tears sprang to his eyes as he drew the lad to his breast.

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"Blessed be God, who has left me this fair image of my Miriam! Come, Caleb, and look for me. Your blind eyes are better than mine, which my sins have smitten. Can you see the chariots of the Lord?"

"Nay, father, but you have taught me to trust in Him who is Himself like 'the mountains round about Jerusalem.' What need have we for chariots? Can He not save by His word as well as by war?"

"True, child! Yet I myself once saw, when the impious Apollodorus raged through our street, slaughtering all he met, and no one could stand against him, I saw—or do I dream it?—I saw a heavenly warrior, clad from head to foot in solid silver, waving a sword of fire, who stood before the wicked man, and smote him to the ground. But when they lifted the heathen there was not the sign of the stroke upon him, though he breathed no more. Would that the Avenger might come again, and speedily! But until He come—until He come—we must trust the word, only the word. Bring the Roll of the Prophet. It surely tells of the times that are now passing."

The boy felt for his sister's hand. Taking it, he pressed it against his blind eyes—a way he had of checking his own too violent feeling. He whispered, as he felt her comforting touch:

"Sister, the troubles have surely broken our father's mind. He does not remember even yesterday."

Then, raising his voice, "You have forgotten, father, that the soldiers came and searched the house and took the Books away."

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Elkiah passed his hands over his forehead as if to smooth the mirror of his memory. Recollection came, but with it a rage that shook his decrepit form until Deborah's kiss allayed his emotion.

"No matter for the Roll, father," said Caleb. "You know that I can repeat what the Books say. Now that I am blind, I keep in memory all that I hear. In that way God lets me have more, perhaps, than if I could see even to white Hermon there in the north."

"Bless the eyes which the Spirit of the Lord has opened!" cried the old man. "Tell me, child, what says the Prophet of this monster who calls himself our King—Epiphanes, the Glorious—for shame!"

"The Prophet says," replied Caleb, quoting the words of Daniel, "that his heart shall be against the Holy Covenant, and they shall pollute the Sanctuary of Strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and shall place the Abomination that maketh desolate."

"Woe! Woe upon Jerusalem!" cried Elkiah. "Why did I not slay the impious Apollonius, that child of Satan, when he rode into our Holy of Holies? Alas! the breath of the Lord has withered the arm of Elkiah that it cannot smite. But the Avenger will come. He will come yet. What says the Prophet further, my son?"

Caleb continued, "And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall be corrupt with flatteries."

"Ah!" groaned the old patriot, his voice gurgling in his throat like the growl of a wild beast. "And my own son, the son of Miriam, corrupted by the flatteries of the Greek! My Benjamin turned into a

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Glaucon! God forgive me for having begotten a traitor!"

Elkiah sat upright on the rug. With averted palm he swept the air, as if he would banish from his heart its paternal instinct. He then covered his face with his hands and cried: "O my Miriam! I thank Thee, O God, that Thou didst take her ere she knew this. But, Lord, why didst Thou take my Miriam, and leave me that—that—traitor? But read on, child."

Waiting a moment until his father's paroxysm had passed, Caleb completed the prediction: "But the people that do know their God shall be strong, and shall do exploits."

"Do exploits? Be strong? That we shall," shrieked the old man. "Your hand, Deborah! My sword! I will go and smite the Syrian."

"Nay, father, that cannot be," said Deborah, as she laid the exhausted form back upon the pillows. "Let the children fulfil the Prophet's word."

"The children! My children!" muttered the old man. "One of them a heathen, another blind, and the other only a girl. Deborah, oh, that thou wert a man, or could wear a sword like the Deborah of old!"

Deborah summoned Ephraim, an old servant of the house, who with Huldah his wife assisted in bringing Elkiah into the roof chamber; for the air grew cold as the sun dropped behind the citadel by the Joppa gate, and left only his golden glow on the top of Olivet eastward.

Little Caleb stood a while leaning over the parapet, his face showing the tremendous movement of his soul, now expressing some ineffable longing, and

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now hardening under some heroic purpose. He turned toward the Temple as if he could see the sacred precincts: but suddenly his great blind orbs were directed southward. As his sister returned to the roof he called to her.

"Deborah, there is a strange noise beyond the city gate, over Ophel!"

"Dear child, you are not yet familiar with the cries at the heathen games. The shouts come from the gymnasium."

"Why, sister, I know all sounds. I know by the dog's barking whether he has the fox on the run or at bay, or has lost him in the hole. And men cry just as the brutes do. I don't need to hear words. I sometimes follow the games in the gymnasium off there. Now it is the hum of the crowd before the contests begin; now the cheer for the runners; the laugh when the wrestlers tumble; the rage of the losers; the joy of the crowd when a favorite wins —I hear it all. But, Deborah, somebody has been hurt over there. Can't you hear something sad in the murmur on Ophel? It is as the fir-trees moan when a storm is coming."

The sound which Caleb heard will be interpreted if we tell of Captain Dion's doings that day.

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IV

THE DISCUS THROW.

HE high plateau of Ophel swells out from the southern wall of the Temple, and looks down upon the vales of Hinnom and Kedron, which come together at its base, five hundred feet below. From this promontory one can see for miles through the deep valley, which is lined near the city with rock-hewn tombs, and in the distance with whitish-gray cliffs, as if the Kedron had become a leper outcast from the company of the beautiful hills and vales which elsewhere surround Jerusalem. Down, down the valley it goes until lost to sight amid the mountains of stone and sand that make the wilderness of Judea. There the leper dies and is buried in the Dead Sea. Whichever way lies the wind, except from the north, it sweeps this promontory of Ophel with refreshing coolness. Here in the olden time the sages and saints of Israel had been accustomed to walk, their meditations on the judgments of God perhaps more sombre because of the gloomy grandeur of the scene; and here the multitudes had thronged, with hearts gladdened by the contrast of joy of their city with the distant desolation.

But now, by the orders of Apollonius, the Governor under Antiochus, the top of Ophel had been levelled for the stately building of the gymnasium.

To one looking up from the valley of the Kedron,

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the graceful Greek porticos must have showed against the old gray walls of the Temple like vines on the scarp of a mountain boulder. In front of the structure lay the athletic field, dotted with many colored pennants which denoted the places reserved for the various games. At one end of the field was the stadium, the running track, some six hundred feet in length. Adjoining this was an open court in which were practised wrestling, throwing the discus, swinging the great hanging stone, hurling the javelin, archery, sword play, boxing, and the like. By the side of this court were baths, and near them great caldrons supplying the luxury of heated water.

In shaded porches were raised platforms upon which at stated hours rhetoricians who plumed themselves upon their eloquence discoursed of philosophy and poetry and love. Here, too, professors of the calisthenic art exhibited in their own persons and those of their pupils the graces of the human form.

Captain Dion emerged from the Street of the Cheesemakers upon the athletic field. He saluted the banner of Apollonius, which flaunted from its tall staff, then cast a spray of ivy at the foot of the statue of Hermes, the god of the race. He was at once hailed by a group of young men with whom he was evidently a favorite.

Among these was Glaucon. A broad-brimmed hat topped his head. Artificially curled black locks stuccoed his brow. A white chlamys, or outer robe, of linen broadly bordered with purple was draped from his shoulder in the latest style of the capital.

"Ah, Glaucon, well met! How has it fared with you since we parted at Joppa?" was Dion's greeting.

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"Has the sea jog gotten out of your legs yet? If the mountains of Carmel and Cassius on the coast had been turned to water the waves could not have tossed us more than when we came from Antioch."

"Jerusalem is a poor exchange for Antioch," replied Glaucon. "One day at Daphne for a lifetime here, but for a few good fellows like you, Captain."

"Did you succeed in getting the order for confiscation reversed?" asked the Greek.

"Oh, yes, I shall hold the property; that is, if I can keep the old man, my father, within doors, so that he doesn't bring a mob about our ears as he did yesterday. Apollonius— Pluto take him!—mulcted me heavily of shekels last night as a guarantee that the old bigot would keep the peace. I wish that you would give the Governor a fair word for me, Dion. You see, I have not come into the estate yet, and haven't many gold feathers to drop. Apollonius seems to think that I am moulting all my ancestral wealth."

"I think I can get the Governor to at least pare your nails without cutting the quick hereafter," replied his friend.

"My thanks. I shall need your help, Captain, in all ways, for though I have donned the King's livery, you Greeks look on me as a Jew. I am like to fall between the upper and nether millstones. My people have cast me off, and, by Hercules! yours do not take to me as they should."

"Never fear, Glaucon," replied Dion. "A man who can swear 'By Hercules!' instead of 'As the Lord liveth!' will soon have the favor of our gods."

"And goddesses, too, I hope," laughed Glaucon. "But I have not thanked you, Dion, for saving my

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father from his crazy venture on the streets yesterday. The shade of Anchises bless you for that!"

"Well up in the poets, too, I see," said the Captain, slapping his comrade on the back. "Your brain is Greek if your blood be Hebrew. But let us hear what this blabber is saying."

The men stood a moment listening to an orator who, with well-oiled locks and classically arranged toga, was addressing a small group within a portico. He was just saying: "Hear then the words of the divine Plato, 'When a beautiful soul harmonizes with a beautiful body, and the two are cast into the same mould, that will be the fairest of sights to him that has an eye to contemplate the vision.' Truly the soul is made fair by the fairness of the body. Thought glows when the eye sparkles. Heroism is bred of conscious strength of muscle. Love burns within the arms of beauty, and with the kisses scented with the sweet breath of health. Think you that the gods would dwell within the statues if the sculptors did not shape the marble and ivory to exquisite proportions?

"Behold, then, the stupidity of these Jews whose foul nests we are destroying. They read their Rolls, but they gain no wisdom. They pray, yet remain impious. It is because they know not the first of maxims, namely, that the body is the matrix of the mind."

"The fool!" was Dion's comment. "There are better declaimers in any Greek village. And"—more to himself than to his comrade, as a band of Jews, among them even some renegade priests, stripped naked, ran by them on their way to the racing stadium—"yet see, there are bigger fools!"

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When the two men passed into the gymnasium proper, the crowd on the benches raised the cry of "Dion! Dion!" until the crossbeam shook down its dust of applause.

The Captain gracefully acknowledged the compliment by taking from his brow the chaplet, now well withered, and flinging it from him into the crowd with the exclamation: "I will win it again before I wear it."

The magnanimous challenge brought the champion another ovation.

The chief gymnasiarch approached, and read from his tablets the names of the day's victors in the various contests that had already taken place. He bade Dion select an antagonist from the list.

"I will throw the discus," said the Captain.

"Then your competitor will be Yusef, the Lebanon giant," read the gymnasiarch. He shouted:

"Hear ye! Yusef of Damascus is challenged by Dion of Phillippi."

Divesting himself of his garment the Greek now stood naked among his compeers.

"Adonis has descended," shouted one, in a tone that might have been taken for either admiration or contempt.

An alipta came and rubbed Dion's arms and back with oil mingled with dust.

"Better rub him against the Jew. He'll get both grease and dirt at a touch," sneered some one.

Dion turned, and, fronting the group whence the insult came, scanned the faces one by one; but there was no response to his mute challenge.

As he moved away one ventured to say, loud enough to be heard by a few about him:

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"The Jewish renegade is protected by special order of the King, or, by the club of Herakles! I would grind his face with my fists."

"The Captain seems to be the pimp's special bodyguard just now," was a reply; after which the knot of men talked in low tones among themselves, casting furtive glances in the direction of Dion.

"Yusef stands on his record of this morning," shouted the gymnasiarch. "He need not throw again unless Dion shall pass him."

The Greek balanced in his hand two circular pieces of bronze, in order to select one of them. The crowd densely lined the way the missile was to fly. There was eager rivalry for places at the goal end, where the friends of the contestants craned their necks to see the exact spot the discus would strike, ready to applaud or dispute it. In this group Glaucon had secured a foremost stand, and waited, leaning with the crowd.

"Here's your chance to stick the pig of a Jew," whispered one to his neighbor, who stood just behind Glaucon.

Dion held the bright bronze in his right hand, his fingers grasping tightly the outer rim, while the weight fell upon his open palm and wrist. Raising his left arm the more perfectly to balance his weight, he pivoted himself upon his left foot, then, swinging the discus backward in almost a complete circle, and combining the muscles of arm and trunk and leg in one tremendous return motion, he flung the metal gleaming through the air.

At the same instant Glaucon was thrust by those behind him headlong into the path of the flying missile. The swift swirl of the disc together with

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its weight made its impact as dangerous as that of a sword blade. It struck the falling form of Glaucon, terribly bruising the base of his head, and laying open a ghastly wound in his neck and shoulder.

Dion strode down the line. He glanced an instant at the prostrate form of his friend, turned as quickly as a bear, seized two of the throng of bystanders, dashed their heads together until they were half-stunned, then flung them sprawling apart. They lay moaning and cursing on the ground amid the derisions of the crowd until the gymnasiarch ordered them under arrest.

The gymnastæ, or surgeons of the field of sports, were summoned; but the case of Glaucon was beyond the present need of their splints and unguents.

Dion bade them carry the apparently lifeless form to Elkiah's house, and himself led the way. It was this sad company which the clairvoyant mind of the blind boy detected before the searching gaze of Deborah saw the approaching litter.

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V

A FLOWER IN A TORRENT

T is Benjamin! Benjamin is hurt!" cried Caleb, leaning an instant over the parapet. While Deborah was looking into the street he felt his way to the steps leading down from the roof into the open court around which the house was built. He darted across this as quickly and silently as a flash from the brass mirror, not even waking Ephraim, the servant, who had fallen asleep watching the ripples in the great basin of the fountain that stood in the centre of the court. In another instant the boy had raised the crossbar from the lintels and was hasting down the narrow street. Extending his hands he guided himself through the crowds, keeping always in the centre of the way as infallibly as a stick floats in the middle of a wild rushing torrent. In vain did Deborah, as she saw him, call him from the parapet. She flew down the stone stairway and out into the street.

"What haste, my black-eyed beauty?" said an impudent soldier, blocking her way.

By a quick movement Deborah eluded him, but only to be stopped scarcely twenty paces beyond by another, who stretched out his arms and seized her by the wrists. She stood as if paralyzed by her wrath at this indignity, for never before had a rude hand touched her; then, with sudden agility and

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strength which seemed beyond a woman's, she wrenched herself from her captor. Taking time and breath for one indignant cry, "You coward!" she ran on, while the crowd was temporarily diverted by their jeers at the discomfited solider.

"The eunuchs are stronger than you, man, for they can keep the women from running away from the harems."

"Her fire-eyes burnt out your heart, did they? Open your corselet, and let's see if it be charred."

Deborah turned into the Cheesemakers Street. Here she met a company of officers.

"Catch the gazelle! She is my spoil!" shouted the leader.

Her arms were instantly seized from behind.

"Apollonius has captured the very Daughter of Jerusalem that the Jews talk about," remarked one.

"Apollonius?" cried Deborah, looking at one whose gorgeous plumage indicated that he was the chief officer.

He was a man of prepossessing appearance. His brow was broad, features finely proportioned; a man evidently trained to think and govern. In younger days he must have been exceedingly handsome, but middle life showed the effects of dissipation. A furtive flicker in his eyes belied his assumption of self-command. His lips were swollen from too frequent communion with the spirit of the vine.

"Apollonius!" cried Deborah. "Does Apollonius dare to break his own orders? Is it true, then, as men say, that there is neither honor nor mercy in a Syrian?" fixing her gaze unflinchingly upon the Governor's face.

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"Ah! and who is my charmer? Beautiful as a leopard at bay, or Aphrodite herself is a hag. Come, can you leap as high as my arms?" said the Governor, amid the laughter of his attendants.

"I am the daughter of Elkiah," said Deborah, "whose house you have given your sworn word to spare, if you be indeed General Apollonius."

"By all the nymphs this side of Olympus! I am sorry to hear it," replied he. "If I had known that the old bigot had so fair a daughter, I would have qualified my order. But let her pass, my men. We must keep our word, of course."

A counter commotion was heard down the street.

"Way for the litter! Way for the litter!" shouted those coming.

With a sharp outcry, Deborah darted from the soldiers about her and ran to the side of the wounded man.

"It is Benjamin!" she exclaimed, throwing her arms about the insensible form which the bearers had for the moment put down. "Speak to me, my brother!"

The girl's grief at first seemed inconsolable. But suddenly she was transformed into a Fury. She stood straight but trembling, with hands clenched, and glared upon the bystanders. For a little her passion prevented speech. Then she broke forth, with tone and gesture and look which fitted her words:

"A curse upon his murderer! Who struck this cowardly blow?"

She raised her hand as if to smite any one who dared confess the deed.

"It was but an accident, fair daughter of Elkiah,"

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responded Dion, with a manner that disarmed her rage. "Your brother is not dead. See, he lives."

He bent over his friend with evident joy as the Jew opened his eyes and gazed, at first with stupidity and then curiously, at the Greek and his sister. The glance at Dion was with the flicker of a smile; that upon his sister brought an expression of pain. The next moment he put his hand to his head, and, uttering a sharp cry, lapsed into unconsciousness.

Deborah and Dion stood one on either side of the litter. Their hands touched as they stroked the forehead of the sufferer. They looked into each other's faces. With her it was only the recognition of a common sympathy.

But Dion had other thoughts. The vision of the face he had seen at Elkiah's doorway had not faded for an instant from his imagination. Now his impression of her beauty was reinforced by the revelation of her soul. What courage! what audacity! yet not beyond a woman's right! Had he struck a wilful blow at Glaucon, he thought that her wrath would have killed him, so just would it have been, and so imperious was her voice and action. Yet what love this woman was capable of! She seemed to him like some goddess weeping at her own altar which had been despoiled; for surely Glaucon was not worthy of this outpouring of her affection. Dion thought that he knew women. To him the most were but as stagnant pools, with surface glistening in the sunlight, while the depths—if there were any—were soiled. But he imagined that this woman's soul was transparent, limpid, and infinitely deep; pouring itself out spontaneously, with as

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little self-consciousness as that of a fountain when it throws aloft its white spray.

Yet he had injured this woman—unintentionally, it was true; but his hand had thrown the fatal disc which cut its way into her soul, as really as into the flesh of her brother. How could he atone for this?

There came also to Dion a deeper anxiety. Glaucon would recover; but what of this girl's coming life? A Jewish maiden left alone amid the license of Antiochus' soldiers! A dove in the serpent's nest would be as safe. Glaucon could not protect her. With Elkiah's death the renegade son would—as he had heard frequently in the camp—quickly "be cashed," and another estate rattle as coin in Apollonius' belt. Then what of this girl? Dion felt as if a hand from the sky was ordaining him her protector. Yet what power had he?

Upon hearing the commotion about the litter Apollonius turned back. As if to redeem his repute for the dastardly insult of a few moments before, he now made most respectful salaam to the young woman, and, with the semblance of kindly solicitude for Glaucon, gave orders detailing Captain Dion to act as guard for the wounded man. Thus, having assumed by his manner the credit for what Dion had already done, he rejoined his suite.

The men were about to lift the litter when Deborah startled them with the cry:

"But Caleb! Where is the blind boy? Surely he came this way."

"We have seen none such. He must have passed by another street. Doubtless he has gone home," was the Greek's response.

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"Oh, I must find him!"

There was a maternal depth in the girl's tones.

"Where could he have gone? Help me, good sir, and the blessing of the Lord will be upon you."

"We could not find him in these streets," said Dion. "Let us go first to your home. If he is not there we will search elsewhere. And I think that my name will open any place where he may be detained."

"Quick, then; let us haste!"

The girl in her eagerness led the way. Reaching the house, she opened the outer door, which had not been fastened after her exit a little while before, and sped across the open court. Elkiah was calling.

"Here am I, father!" and in an instant more she was beside him on the roof.

"My daughter, where have you been? Have the Gentiles bewitched even my Deborah, that she should go out of doors to gaze at them? Nay, veil your face with shame, child. Henceforth you must abide strictly in the house. It may be our sepulchre, but I would rather my daughter died here, than that the same sun should greet her eyes and theirs, except that she hated them. But for a daughter of Jerusalem to so much as look upon their garments is to play the wanton."

"Speak not such words, my father," cried Deborah, kneeling by his side, and placing his hands upon her forehead in claiming his blessing.

"It is Benjamin, father. They have brought him back to us, and——"

"Benjamin!" cried the old man, his voice failing in utterance until it became almost a hiss. "Benjamin! I have no son Benjamin. He has disowned his

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name; I disown his blood. What does the traitor Glaucon do in the house of Elkiah? Let him be gone! I charge thee, Deborah, if thou be a true daughter, banish him from our house."

"But, father——"

"Nay, let him be gone!"

"But, father, Benjamin is harmed; wounded; it may be he is killed."

The venerable man raised himself on his arm, and stared about him. Deborah laid him gently back upon the pillows.

"Oh, father, do not curse him. It may be he will not live. Do not curse him."

He gazed at her, taking her face between his hands and drawing it close to his.

"Aye, my Miriam again! Would God, Deborah, you had been my son!"

"But, father, pity our Benjamin. He is grievously hurt."

A change passed over the features of Elkiah. Suddenly the tears dimmed his sight, and he said:

"Benjamin hurt? My boy? The child of Miriam harmed? Where is he? Help me, that I may go to him."

He vainly tried to rise. His hands clenched as he muttered:

"The Lord avenge the house of Elkiah upon the heads of the heathen! The Lord spare my child! Benjamin! Benjamin! Would God I had died for thee!"

When she had seen the wounded man brought safely into the lower chamber, Deborah quickly searched every part of the house, and her cry for Caleb rang from the roof to the court.

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"He is not here. I will go again to the street."

The strong, but kind, hand of Dion blocked the way: "Nay, good maiden, you cannot return to the city. I will go where you could not. I swear to search the streets and camps if you will but pledge me to abide here."

"A pledge to a Greek!"

But the look of scorn passed quickly from her face, as she saw the solicitude in his. After a little thought, in which her agitated manner told that she could keep such a promise only with her body, and that her whole soul would go with Dion in his search, she replied:

"It is well. I see it is my duty to stay here, sir. But hasten! Hasten, and I will pray for you every step. The Lord bless you, good sir!"

"Your own blessing were enough," said Dion, as he ran down the steps.

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VI

A JEWISH CUPID

ION knew that a personal search for the lad among the crowds of soldiers, who were lodged in half the houses of the city, and in hundreds of tents beyond the walls, would be a long, if not a useless one, since, if any persons had captured the child, they would have reason for concealing his whereabouts. Dion went, therefore, at once to the headquarters of Apollonius, that he might obtain an order that none would dare disregard.

The house appropriated to the Governor's use was the palace on Mount Sion. Though the finest residential structure in Jerusalem, like Elkiah's house, it was but a sorry scion of its architectural pedigree. For instead of the colonnades where Solomon once walked, and the golden roof which sheltered the harem of that pious libertine, were now the lime-whitened walls and domes of what, but for its site, might have been taken for a caravansery.

Captain Dion passed through the court, with its broken ancient fountains and cheap reproductions of recent Greek statuary. He was greeted by Apollonius at the entrance to the hall of audience.

"Welcome, Dion! In time to sup with me tonight. After the feast we will have a symposium that will make the dead Alexander come to life with envy. He would risk another death by fever for the

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sake of a draught of such wines as the King has sent me from Antioch."

Dion excused himself, and stated the purpose of his visit.

"Nay; so jovial and witty a comrade as yourself cannot be let off," cried the roystering commandant. "Nor need you trouble yourself about the boy. I will issue the order that he be brought here. It will be a quicker way and more certain—that is, if the circumcised dog be living, which we may doubt; for, since the permission given yesterday, the men are making short work of all this Jewish spawn."

Dion changed his tack, and urged that he must return to take care of his friend Glaucon.

"What care you for the traitor Glaucon?" replied the General. "If that man betrays his own race he will not be true to you. It is enough that such creatures as Glaucon are allowed to live, and keep their property, which should be our common spoil. Let him die of his hurt; we shall all be the better off, with one Jew less and houses more. But stay you shall, Dion, or, by Herakles! I will issue orders to cut the boy's throat when found. No carouse is complete if Dion be absent," he said, throwing his arm about him. "Come now, it's a treaty with you. I know that your friendship is not for Glaucon, but for the black-eyed Diana, his sister, whom I saw to-day. Drink with us you shall, or I shall be jealous as Zeus is of his Hera, and send your Jewish goddess straight to Antiochus as a gift. Go, then, get your ivy and head-grease, and come back quickly; for see, the gnomon already casts shadow of six paces—the hour the gods themselves have set for supper."

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"Then I must eat your dainty meats," said Dion, seeing the futility of opposing the distempered will of his superior. Veiling his resentment under a forced hilarity, he retired, and a half-hour later returned in company with the other guests.

These were high officers in gorgeous togas, and caps whose tasselled tops lapped down to their shoulders. Each of these revellers was accompanied to the palace by one or more slaves, who would wait upon their masters at the feast, and take them home when drunk. A few subalterns were invited who, like Dion, compensated for lack of rank by their ready wit and their repertoire of stories and songs.

As the guests reclined upon the cushions their shoes were unlaced and removed by Apollonius' menials, their feet washed in scented water, and gently rubbed with towels, while their caps were displaced by crowns of bay leaves gemmed with the pearly berries. Then the low tables were drawn within reach, laden with all that the distant markets of Antioch could furnish; for the conquered land of Judea gave them not so much as a fig or date. The Jews had left for the invaders only fish and game; but woe to the Syrian soldier who should venture beyond his camps to drop a line in lake or send an arrow after beast or bird!

The viands were quickly disposed of, for, following the Greek custom, no wine was poured until the meats and spicy condiments had created abundant thirst.

"A soldier's hunger is soon satisfied, but his thirst is like the river Oceanus that runs round the earth and has no end," cried Apollonius. "Let's to the potation. Who shall be master of the feast?"

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"Dion! Dion!" was shouted, with clapping and cheers.

Apollonius whispered to his next neighbor:

"The master of the feast, according to custom, must remain sober. We must have Dion's tongue loosened with wine, or we shall not skim the cream of his wit. Call for Kallisthenes. He is duller drunk than sober."

"Kallisthenes! Kallisthenes!" went round the table, as the suggestion of the host was whispered from one to another.

"This is a deserved honor," shouted Apollonius, "for the man who fired the gates of the Jews' Temple."

"Aye, it was a valiant deed, for there wasn't so much as a lame Jew to stop him," said Sotades to Dion, who reclined next to him.

"If Apollonius is scattering heroic honors to-night, he should send for the High Priest, Menelaos, for he stole the golden candlesticks from the Holy Place before we could get hold of them," said another.

"Menelaos! The Jew turned Greek! Dion says he once frightened an Ethiopian into a white man, So Menelaos became a Greek. That Jew's lips would poison the wine. Let him get ready for his feast with the worms of Gehenna," grunted the Governor.

Kallisthenes at once assumed the prerogative of Ruler of the Feast. He put on a chaplet of ivy, and proclaimed the laws for the hour.

"Hear ye, my subjects, the rules of the feast, which all shall obey under penalty of the wrath of the gods. May Bacchus and Aphrodite both desert the wretch who fails in his duty."

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"Law the first—The wine shall not be mixed with more than half water."

"What goblets shall we use?" asked one. "If the larger ones, I vote for one part wine to three parts water, as Hesiod recommends."

"A frog's drink, as Pharecrates called it," replied the Ruler. "Half and half it shall be, and he who shirks the large goblet shall drink from the crater itself. Are we not all philosophers? And did not Socrates drink from the wine cooler?"

"Agreed! Agreed!" echoed round the circle.

One ruddy-faced veteran knelt in mock adoration at the feet of the Feast Master:

"I humbly crave that since I was born in distant Phrygia, we to-night follow the custom of the barbarians, and drink no water at all. Let us be inspired with the unadulterated soul of the god."

"Bacchus pardon thy gluttony for the sake of thy piety," said the Master.

"Law the second—Whereas wine should be drunk either hot or cold, and whereas, these Jews who are still above Hades have stopped the way to the mountains where lies the snow to chill it, therefore it is ordained that all drinks shall be heated with both fire and spice."

"Agreed! Agreed!"

"Law the third—Every goblet shall be quaffed from brim to bottom between two breaths."

"It is agreed!"

"Oh! my paunch!" cried one. "So you think me a Deucalion to stand the deluge?"

Servants poured the water and wine in equal quantities into the crater, or great bowl, from

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which it was ladled into the large goblets, holding half a quart each.

"A bumper first to Bacchus."

It was drunk with avidity. One started a song from the old poet Anacreon:

> "Thirsty earth drinks up the rain,
> Trees from earth drink that again,
> Ocean drinks the air, the sun
> Drinks the sea, and him the moon.
> Any reason canst thou think
> I should thirst while all these drink?"

"Eros follows Bacchus," cried the Feast Master. "Now a cup to the Syrian goddess Astarte, since we are in her land, or to Aphrodite, Venus, or whatever name each one calls his lady-love."

"Aye, a cup to Bathsheba! if any one has found a Jewess to his taste," shouted Apollonius, lifting his goblet toward Dion.

Songs and comic speeches, extemporized pantomimes, riddles and stories, as the wine happened to stir the peculiar talent or caprice of the guest, interspersed the drinking.

As the hours advanced the curtains at the doorway were swung aside, and a troop of dancing girls entered. They were of various races; the fair Caucasian from the Euxine, the Egyptian whose hue was the reflection of her desert sands, swarthy half-black Arabs from beyond Jordan, and Nubians whose faces seemed cut from solid jet—slaves whom Apollonius had captured or exchanged for other spoil of battle. These rendered the various songs and dances of their native lands. One performed the hazardous exploit of stepping to the throbbing of the zither between a score of sword blades, set with

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points upward. Another honored Apollonius by advancing on her hands, seizing the ladle of the wine jar between her toes, and dexterously filling with its contents the empty cup of the commandant.

"Let Apollonius, the valiant conqueror of Jerusalem, show us a daughter of Israel. He is making a harem of them, if report be true," cried one.

"Jewish maidens will not dance on anything except the thin air. So we had to hang a score of them yesterday," replied Apollonius. "But I will show you a genuine Jewish Cupid."

"A circumcised Cupid! Apollonius' wit is as sharp as his knife," cried Kallisthenes.

The Governor whispered to an attendant. In a few moments there was thrust into the room a naked boy. His limbs were exquisitely moulded. His large distended pupils shone with strange lustre in the flashing lights of the jewelled lanterns. His outstretched hands and cautious step showed that there was no sight in his eyes.

"Bravo! Bravo! Cupid is blind! Well thought, Apollonius! Let us see to whom he has brought a message from the goddess," said Sotades.

At this moment Kallisthenes uttered a cry of surprise and horror. He leaped to his feet and pointed to the great bowl from which the wine was taken.

The servant, whose attention had been unduly drawn to the revellers, had inadvertently laid the ladle across the brim of the crater,—a thing regarded as ominous of dire calamity to some one of the guests, the evil to be averted only by the instant cessation of the revelry.

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The feasters looked, and echoed the consternation of the Feast Master.

The guests unceremoniously rose, and were hastening as fast as their uncertain legs and frightened attendants could carry them, when Apollonius recalled them. "A curse on the slave! Let us appease our Nemesis of the feast with the offal of the villain who has broken its rules!" and lifting the crater he felled the unfortunate man who had perpetrated the dire omen.

As the guests, half sobered by the scene, stood about the prostrate body Apollonius said:

"Hear you, good friends, to-morrow we will treat you to something more ominous still. We will offer another sacrifice,—a sow upon the Jews' altar in the Temple court. Attend me there. Farewell! Bacchus protect his own!"

Dion took the hand of Apollonius.

"My thanks, General, for your aid in recovering this child, whom I will return to his home."

The Governor lowered his voice:

"Serve me as well when occasion requires, Captain Dion; and if Elkiah's daughter does not reward your service with her favor, tell her what she owes to Apollonius, and I will cast my bait."

The revellers dispersed to their various quarters, some to the citadel, some to the camps outside the walls, and some to the mansions from which they had ejected the owners. One or two of the slaves lighted torches of resinous wood to guide the feet of their masters along the stones, which were slippery with the sewage thrown from the doorways, or poured over the roof parapets into the street. But most of the servants were fully occupied in sup-

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porting the limp bodies of their lords, and now and then lifting them out of the holes where, once fallen, they insisted upon sitting, while they called for more wine, or relieved themselves of what they had already taken.

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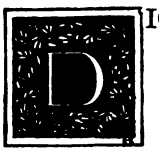
VII

IN THE TOILS OF APOLLONIUS



ION hastened toward the house of Elkiah, leading the blind child by the hand. As they threaded their way through the narrow streets, Caleb told his story of the day's adventures. He had been seized in the afternoon, and taken somewhere beyond the walls, among the soldiers in the tents. He overheard his captors talking of the reward that Elkiah would give for the return of his son, and intimating how much more they could wring from Glaucon, when some one claimed him in the name of Apollonius. He was led away, as he supposed, to be killed, and was surprised at being conducted to the palace.

Dion plied him with questions, but could elicit no further information. The Captain knew Apollonius too well to believe that the introduction of a Jewish Cupid at the feast, and the rescue of the lad, were all there was to his purpose. He pondered the problem in the light of the Governor's well-known selfishness and sensuality. Did his design reach to the possession of Deborah?

Coming to the house of Elkiah they were surprised to find the outer door unfastened. Caleb ran up the stairs and heralded his coming with many shouts.

Elkiah was sitting beside the wounded Benjamin in the darkness.

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"The Lord be praised! His mercy endureth forever!" ejaculated the father as Caleb flung himself into his arms.

"But where is Deborah?" cried the lad.

"Is not your sister with you? Then how came you hither, child?" replied the old man, in that quick terror to which the events of recent days had made him susceptible.

"I brought him here, sir. I, Dion."

"Met you not my daughter? You sent for her? No? I understand it not. One came bringing as a token a bit of the lad's clothing, and pledged to take her where the lost might be found. I thought the messenger had come from you. Ere I could detain her, Deborah was gone. Was it not you that sent? May I believe a Greek? Trifle not, I beseech you, with one whose life-thread can endure but little more. My daughter! O give me my daughter! If harm has come to her through thee, the curse of the Lord rot thy bones! O my child! My child!"

"It is the trick of the soldiers. They thought to get Deborah too," cried Caleb.

"Alas," said Dion, "that you were not blind, and could see to take me to the place where they kept you before the General sent for you."

"That I can do," said the boy. "I saw all the way."

"Saw?"

"Aye, with my feet and with my nostrils and with my ears, I saw everything. Outside the walls we went down, down, down; it must have been to cross the Kedron. Then we went up, up, up, fully halfway the ascent toward Bethany. We went close to a cactus hedge, for I felt on my cheeks the cool air

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the cactus breathes. Then over a broken wall, for I fell among the stones. Next a house, high and of smooth mortar walls, for I can tell such things by the echo one's footfall makes. The tent we stopped at was near where horses, as many as threescore, were tethered; this I knew from their neighing. It is an old camp, for the odor of the dung was old."

"I have the spot," said Dion. "It is the camp of Cleanthes. Let me away! But Glaucon, your Benjamin, does well?" bending a moment over the sleeping form.

"So said the surgeon you brought," replied Elkiah. "But haste! O God of Abraham, take my son if Thou wilt, but spare, oh, spare, my Deborah! God be merciful! Thy billows are gone over me. Spare me that I may see again the face of my child, and gather strength before I go hence, and be no more!"

Caleb's judgment that Deborah had been decoyed by the soldiers proved true. Her guide led her to the palace of Apollonius. On the way she passed the roysterers returning from the banquet. The presence of the soldier did not shield her from the insult of their tongues so well as did her preoccupation with anxiety for her brother. She was left alone in the antechamber of the Governor. Now and then she inquired in vain of the passing servants for the blind child. Growing suspicious, she endeavored to make her escape, but found the exits fastened, as she tried them one by one.

At length the Governor came to her. He was flushed and unsteady from the effects of his debauch, and accosted her with maudlin insolence.

"Ah, my pretty Jewess!"

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"I came, sir, to claim the blind child, son of Elkiah."

"But suppose I should first claim the daughter of Elkiah. On the street I let you go, but since you have come to me, well—that is different. My will must rule in my own palace."

"Aye, the will of Apollonius, who has given his word for the safety of the house of Elkiah," replied the girl undaunted.

"True, my fair one, and Apollonius will keep his word. You are in danger anywhere else than here. None are safe in Jerusalem but those who come beneath my shadow. To-morrow the soldiers will be let loose. I cannot hold them back any longer. Elkiah's house may go with the rest of the damned Jews. Apollonius' friendship is better than the sword of his soldiers, eh, is it not?"

He put out his hands.

This terrible threat and the hideous alternative it presented to her were too much for the girl to take in at once. She sank at the monster's feet.

"Ah, my sweet one, don't do that. No slave shall you be to me; but I will give you as many jewels as—as the fair Clarissa, the Queen of the Grove of Daphne, wears. And I swear by your bright eyes, you shall outshine the very goddesses of Antiochus' palace."

He stooped and touched her. Then she quivered as if stung by a scorpion.

"Mercy, sir! Mercy for the house of Elkiah! An old man, a blind child, a wretched girl,—these are not enemies for the great Apollonius to crush. Brave men would despise him for harming such."

"Humph!" grunted the Governor, "and they

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would despise me more for letting such a splendid woman as you go to another,—even to Dion."

At this word Deborah leaped to her feet.

Apollonius held out his arms to her, but recoiled as he saw her whole frame the impersonation of hatred and rage. He would as soon have ventured to grasp a sheet of flame. Then his face hardened. Fixing upon her a pair of cold, steely eyes, he assumed the pose of a bargainer. Had each word been a knife-cut severing a piece of her flesh for the weighing scale, he could not have more cruelly tortured her.

"I have heard that the daughters of Jewry are of such filial devotion that they will give their lives for their sires. Will this one not give Apollonius her friendship for her father's life?"

Deborah stood like a statue. The flush faded from her face as if her soul had fled. She forgot for the moment the scene and the man before her. She was with her father. She saw his face so white, with blood on his beard. She imagined him led out to death; thrust over the city walls; prodded with spear; tortured on the rack; having the tongue torn from his mouth,—for such things had recently been done in Jerusalem.

The cry came from her lips:

"Give me my father's life!"

"Aye, and thine with it, sweet maiden," cried Apollonius, imagining that his prey was yielding to his importunities.

But he was quickly undeceived. Deborah's whole form seemed to expand. In the wine-dimmed eyes of her captor she was transformed from a helpless girl into the most queenly of women, whose dignity

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awed him; then into some avenging deity; a divine apparition of purity which had come to scourge him for his lifetime of lust and cruelty.

"My life?" she cried. "Can a Greek understand this—that Elkiah would slay his daughter with his own hand if he knew that Apollonius had touched her?"

The soldier who had never quailed before men was cowed by this woman. What was left of manhood in him asserted itself in maudlin apology. He sought to appease the righteous fury he had excited.

But it was too late. The woman was no longer a suppliant. As a soldier is turned by excitement of the battle into a fiend, so Deborah was turned into a soldier, and now became her own defender. She withdrew to the farther side of the apartment. As she did so she caught sight of the sword of the General lying upon a table. She noted its hilt gemmed with jewels, and its blade etched with heroic devices. She seized it, and sprang like a tigress upon the unarmed man. As he crouched back to avoid the stroke, Deborah stopped.

"Stay, I will not slay you like a caged beast. Let the great Apollonius outrage a defenseless woman—a Jewish woman would despise herself if she harmed a defenseless Greek. The daughter of feeble Elkiah will give the brave Apollonius a chance for his life. Unbar the door, or let it be said that a woman slew thee. I will not ask a pledge of a Greek to spare my father. I would not trust the word he has already broken. Jehovah of Israel will avenge my father's house! Unbar the door!"

Apollonius flung a quick glance around to discover a mode of escape. Had he been fully possessed of his

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wits he would doubtless have found some means of disarming his assailant. Yet the action of the woman was so alert and resolute that most men would have been held at bay. She poised the weapon for its lunge. Had the Jewess learned the art of fence? Or did the quickening of her faculties by the intensity of her purpose supply the deficiency of training? Her attitude was perfect for the giving of the fatal blow. In the General's eyes at the moment, if she were not Ares, the god of war, she was Athena armed,—no less puissant.

The baffled chieftain had no alternative but submission. Yet it was not mere submission to the accident of her advantage. There was a sort of voluntary homage in the way in which, half sobered by the situation, he yielded to the inevitable.

"The daughter of Elkiah has won her liberty," said he, with a wave of his hand that nearly sent him sprawling. He staggered to where a bronze plate hung, and struck it. As its signal was answered from without, he cried:

"Ho, Servites, let the woman pass!"

Without losing for an instant her attitude of caution, Deborah passed to the doorway. Putting the weapon beneath her robe, she said:

"This will I keep as the pledge of Apollonius' honor until he shall win it back from braver hands than his own. Our God will raise us up a defender. The Avenger of Israel shall come."

Pausing a moment between the curtains which Servites held back for her passage, and fixing upon her captor a look of utter contempt, she drew the sword again from her garment, and flung it ringing upon the marble floor, with the exclamation:

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"But no! Let it not be said that a Hebrew girl despoiled the General of the Greeks. Apollonius may keep his sword until the Lord Jehovah gives us a man strong enough to take it from him."

She passed out.

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VIII

DEBORAH DISCOVERS HERSELF

ITH the impulse of flight Deborah glided out from beneath the portal of Apollonius' palace. For a moment she glanced backward, as if her soul would hurl its final malediction upon her enemy. Then she was seized with fright as she realized her danger. The lanterns which hung about the great doorway and throughout the court, with their transparent screens of red and yellow and blue, glared upon her like the eyes of demons. She ran at first without thought of her direction, driven by a wild impulse to escape.

When she reached the open street the light of the moon, shining down serenely between the housetops, seemed like the white shield of some heavenly defender to save her from the pursuing lanterns. She paused to think. Whither should she flee? Should she flee at all? Caleb? Surely he must be somewhere in the place she had left. With that thought her feet became as lead. She could not desert the child.

She would go back, demand admission to the presence of the tyrant, and risk anything, everything, for her brother's liberation.

Quickly she saw the futility of this project. She might not be readmitted, and if so, Apollonius would now avenge himself by the accomplishment of his original purpose. What should she do? If

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she went to her home, would not some emissary of the enraged Governor intercept her? Surely this proud and remorseless man would not let her live to tell the story of his shame.

Partly from instinctive caution, partly from the feeling that the darkness of the night better fitted her own uncertainty of purpose, she kept close to the houses on the shadowed side of the narrow street. Though she walked on rapidly, her soul stood still, like a sentinel peering through the gloom that echoes the step of some as yet unseen danger.

By her side at length loomed piles of fallen stone and half-standing walls. These were the ruins of what a few weeks before had been the elegant residence of Ben Isaac, one of the wealthiest merchants of Jerusalem. It had been razed by order of King Antiochus, who had first pillaged its treasures and then carried its master captive to Antioch, and there exacted from him by torture the remnant of his riches.

Deborah turned in amid the ghastly wreck. The wild desolation so fitted her experience that the spot seemed restful. The moon was sinking toward the west, and poured its full lustre against a still-standing wall. The very sharpness of the beams cut a block of contrasted darkness on the side toward the east. Deborah climbed over the rough stones and hid within the shadow.

Beneath her lay, like snowdrifts, the squat domes and flat roofs of the houses in the lower Street of the Cheesemakers, once the homes of honest artisans and tradespeople, now the sleeping-troughs of the vile herd hired to trample out the life of the nation.

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Beyond, the vision broken only by the massive shape of the Temple on Moriah, lay the vale of Jehoshaphat, the quiet slopes of Olivet, and the long hills to the north glittering here and there as the moonlight fell upon the hated tents of the enemy. As the rising sea pours its tide into a narrow creek, so there came upon her a sense of her nation's shame and woe. At first her power of definite thought seemed destroyed by the flood. Why could she not cease also to feel? Why could she not die and become as insensate as the stones, these other ruins about her?

At length she realized a strange transformation taking place within her; she felt that she had grown suddenly to be no longer a child, but a woman. Nor was she merely a woman of Jerusalem, but a strong avenging spirit. She drank the bitterness of her own heart, and was intoxicated, frenzied, with it. She, who had never felt anything but love, had now learned to hate, and it seemed good to her. Then she became frightened at this revelation of herself to herself. She had possessed a mastiff, gentle, affectionate. Little blind Caleb would lie between its great paws as in the lap of Huldah. Once the beast was stoned upon the street. From that day his temper was changed. He became a savage brute; doubtless his original wild nature reasserting itself. Was she herself not some cruel, vicious spirit suddenly awakened?

She prayed, "God save me from myself!"

An answer came. It did not allay her excitement, but exalted her; seemed to inspire her.

The music of revelry in the tents beyond the walls became to her spiritualized senses like the timbrel

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and song of Miriam of old, when that woman led the hosts of Israel by the waters of the Red Sea. Was not her own name Deborah? and did not a Deborah once lead her nation in battle? She remembered how her father had bemoaned her being only a girl, unless she could grow into another Deborah indeed. She heard again the words of the ancient song, "Awake! awake, Deborah! awake! Awake! Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive!"

If she could not imitate the great prophetess, why could she not emulate the deed of Jael, who drove the nail through the head of the sleeping Syrian general, Sisera? Why had she not slain Apollonius? A woman, a common woman of Israel, had delivered her land; why should not she? She murmured aloud the words of the Scripture, "Blessed above all women shall Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite, be; blessed shall she be above all women in the tent."

Then she prayed, "Oh, God of Israel, take Thy handmaiden for what Thou wilt—for what Thou wilt!"

A chill, as of a wind from icy Hermon, ran through her frame, though the night was not cold. Was this the breath of the Lord? Then her blood became like liquid fire, and burned along the veins. Was she in communion with the divine fury? Again her flesh felt a cooling sensation, as if fanned and softly touched by an angel's wing. Was not an angel with her? These experiences were repeated again and again.

Long time she sat upon a stone amid the ruins. She hailed the moonlight that lay beyond as some

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all-watchful Power; the shadow in which she sat became like some awful Presence. Was not this a token of God's will, approving her own thought to become an avenger of the wrongs of her people?

At length the moonlight faded; the shadow disappeared, for the dawn sent its ruddy gleams along the east. That was to her the smile of the Lord. Henceforth she was to be, not the daughter of Elkiah, but the daughter of Jerusalem; the child of her nation; the sacrifice, if need be, for her people. The fire had been put out on the Temple altar. Holy priests could no longer bind the brutes for sacrifice. But the great cause of God was itself the altar, and she—she would cling to that altar, binding herself there by the cords of a willing consecration. With the words of an oft-repeated psalm—words that had a meaning infinitely deeper now than she had ever conceived before—"Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God; bind the sacrifice to the altar," she stepped out of the shadow of the wall into the blending light of the setting moon and rising sun.

In an instant she darted back into her retreat. The stalwart form of a soldier was passing; but she was too late to escape his detection. The man halted, put his hand above his eyes as if to brush away the darkness, and turned in among the ruins.

Captain Dion's search for Deborah in the camp of Cleanthes beyond the Kedron had, of course, been fruitless. As he returned to the city, what had heretofore been a vague suspicion of the treachery of Apollonius became a conviction, and filled him with rage. Had he questioned himself, he would have said that his wrath was because of the personal

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insult the Governor had put upon him, in tricking him in his purpose. He even thought of the slight at the banquet when Apollonius refused to allow him the honor of being Feast Master. Dion was not aware—for he had no skill in introspection—that he had been driven over the stones of Kedron and through the streets of the city like a madman, by love for a girl; that but for such fuel to his passion his resentment against Apollonius might have died away, or been suppressed by the sense that it was imprudent to antagonize one so much his superior in rank.

Dion's mind was somewhat confused by its own effervescence when he passed along the street in front of the house of Ben Isaac. His attention was drawn by a figure moving amid the ruins. Was this some strolling woman? Surely none would seek such a place at such an hour. He was not superstitious, but might not this be some shade of the slaughtered household of Ben Isaac? or, perhaps, one of the former servants searching furtively for jewels and coins which were known to have been concealed in secret nooks between the walls? His curiosity, if not his soldierly duty, would have led him to inspect.

With drawn sword he strode in between the fallen stones.

"Out of this!" he cried.

Captain Dion was a brave man, but at the moment he preferred that any pilferer might escape rather than he himself should encounter the ghost of a dead Jew. With the sun rising and a goodly rattle of a carnal weapon any self-respecting wraith from Hades ought to flit back to his appointed shades.

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He turned the angle of the standing wall. Surely that was no apparition. Deborah stood with right hand uplifted to challenge the intruder. It was the attitude Dion had seen within Elkiah's gateway. He would scarcely have recognized her otherwise, so changed was she in feature by the tragedy of the night.

"The daughter of Elkiah! Gods! why are you in this place? What villainy have you fled from? Tell me, and I swear that I shall not sheathe my sword until you are avenged."

The familiar voice recalled her.

"The child! My Caleb!" she cried.

"The lad! He is at home. I found him; I brought him."

Complete as had been her transformation from a child into a spirit of vengeance, the kindly tone and news brought by Dion made her a girl again. She felt her weakness, her need of protection. She sat upon a stone, and the tears which she thought had been forever dried within her by the terrors of the night, burst forth as from a fresh fountain.

"My dear Deborah——"

She shrank from Dion's touch as he laid his hand upon hers, but it was only for an instant; his interest in her was evidently too sincere for her to resent. Jew and Greek, of races divided by eternal hatred, yet, as beneath the deepest sea the land connects the shores, they were two human creatures. Need and helpfulness—they are the two lobes of one heart, and beat from common impulses. She allowed him to take her hand in his, as even her blind brother would have done.

She said nothing of Apollonius' insolence. Had

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she told that, our story would have been different, for Dion's hot blood would surely have anticipated the great Avenger who was to come.

As they walked toward her home, the Greek studied furtively the face of his companion. How changed! He assigned for it but one occasion, her loving anxiety for her father and brother. He had known but little of such emotions, for his own life had been from childhood among the friends whom rank or chance had brought him; love was to him only a closer good comradeship. But now, through Deborah's eyes he seemed to be looking into unknown depths, fathomless places of the soul, while heretofore in his intercourse with women and men, he had sounded only the shallows.

As they neared the house of Elkiah, Deborah with the frankness of a child said:

"The Lord reward you, sir, for your kindness to me and to my father's house!"

"Will not your God reward me by letting me serve still further one whom, before all the gods, I have learned to love?"

She surely heard his words, but did not take in their meaning. Love? Yes, for her brother Benjamin; the love which a valiant soul has for doing any chivalric deed; the love which is respect and sympathy for one in distress—this was all she took from his words. How could a Greek mean more when speaking of love to a daughter of the race he was commissioned to destroy?

With these thoughts—or was it with lack of real thought about the significance of Dion's words?—she entered her house, and the Greek went slowly back to his camp.

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IX

THE NASI'S TRIUMPH

T was the twenty-fifth day of the month Chisleu, which answers to the Roman December. Ten days before, Apollonius, by order of King Antiochus, had erected in the Temple court an altar to Jupiter Olympus. This day the crowning of the blasphemy was to be perpetrated by the destruction of the ancient altar of the Jews, and the pollution of the great rock where it stood—the rock sacred in the reverence of the nation since Abraham had there bound his son Isaac for the sacrifice; the loadstone of the people during the years of captivity, toward which they prayed when they hung their harps upon the willows by the rivers of Babylon.

Apollonius' invitation to the revellers of the previous night to be present in the Temple court, was honored by the attendance of all that company with the exception of Captain Dion. These, the Governor's guests of honor, occupied a platform near to the gate of the Holy Place, while the soldiers from barracks in the city and camps in the fields swarmed like bees, and settled in disorderly masses everywhere about the Temple mount. The overlooking walls were topped with a dense array of conical felt hats and bronze helmets, while thousands of legs, ending in the heavy cothurn—the buskin worn with gruesome propriety by both tragedians and soldiers—depended from the coping, and dangled

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above the heads of the crowd that stood below. Warriors from the mountains of Bithynia chaffed in unintelligible speech with those from the Euphrates, as together they clung to cornices and capitals like chattering bats. Wherever an elevation or projection offered a glimpse of the Temple plaza there was a mouth full of derision for the religion of a people that had not so much as a statue or idol to worship.

At Apollonius' nod an enormous trumpet brayed forth the signal. Men took down the bar that blocked the gateway, where once hung the splendid doors—those which Kallisthenes had burned. A procession, such as might appropriately have had its rehearsal in Pandemonium, entered the sacred precincts. It was headed by a huge Syrian who personated the Jewish High Priest. His gigantic proportions were magnified by an enormous tub, which he wore on his head to burlesque the genuine Pontiff with his flower-shaped mitre inscribed "Holiness to the Lord." On the breast of this buffoon was a clumsy shield, painted coarsely in panels of twelve different colors, to represent the Urim and Thummim, from whose twelve mysterious jewels once flashed the will of the Lord. The pomegranates, wrought in silk upon the vestments of the real priest, and the tiny bells which interspersed them, were imitated by a string of dried gourd shells which clattered against one another as the mountebank strode along.

Behind him came a herd of swine, prodded by soldiers clad as common priests. The mock Pontiff shouted a lewd prayer to Jehovah, and drove his short sword into the throat of a huge black boar, the signal for the slaughter of the herd. Obscene

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songs and shouts mingled with the death squeals of the victims, while the blasphemers, stripping bare their lower limbs, danced in the blood which drenched the sacred pavement.

One huge sow was covered with a white blanket on which was inscribed the four letters indicating the name of the God of Israel. This beast was led to what remained of the foundation of the old altar, and there disemboweled. Her broth was scattered about the Holy of Holies, and her offal flung by the hilarious crowd into one another's faces.

Piles of the sacred Rolls, containing the Law collected by the great scribe Ezra, were brought from their cabinets in the Temple. These were sprinkled with swine's filth and burned.

There was then led in a band of captive Jews, mostly of the servant class, since their masters had already been disposed of. These were stripped naked amid hilarious taunts for the sign of their race. Each was forced to hold a piece of the sow's flesh in his teeth. If one allowed it to fall, he was stabbed to death and cast among the carcasses of the beasts.

The crowd grew demented with their blasphemous sport. They demanded more and more human victims. Every Jew found in the streets was haled with insult of tongue and the prick of spear-points to the scene of butchery. The decree of the King granting immunity to certain households was of little moment. While the demonized multitude did not dare to altogether ignore the certificate of royal clemency which was affixed to the gates and lintels of a favored few, private soldiers themselves assumed to test the loyalty of the inmates.

Elkiah's household was thus challenged. The old

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man was dragged to his doorway and given the alternative of worshipping Jupiter or being put to death. He took the spices which they thrust into his shaking hand, as if he purposed to drop them upon the Greek altar at the gate. A howl of disappointment rose from the crowd, who imagined that their victim was thus escaping them; but it soon changed to a wild cry of cruel gratification, for Elkiah only looked a moment upon the grains, while his lips moved in some inaudible prayer; then he flung them into the faces of his challengers:

"The curse of Nadab and Abihu, who offered strange fire upon the altar, be upon the son of Israel who this day denies his God! The worms of hell consume you all!"

Before he could be hindered Elkiah threw himself against the little heathen altar. It fell crashing beneath him. The next instant he was seized and thrown like the carcass of a beast across the shoulders of a gigantic Greek, who carried him to the Temple. Here he was cast into a pile of patriots, some still breathing, the most dead.

"The old bigot is gone at last," said his bearer.

"Then I will grease him for better frying over in Gehenna," said another, as he forced a piece of swine's fat into Elkiah's mouth.

The insult revived the patriot. He spat out the uncleanness. Then a strange strength came into the venerable man. Before hands could grasp him he had risen to his feet. His bent form became suddenly erect with the inspiration of his passion. The crowd drew back a little as if the dead had come to life. Elkiah's voice rose to a shrill outcry, and rang above the howling of the multitude:

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"Say the heathen, 'The sacrifice shall cease on the altar of Jewry'? It shall not cease. I myself will be a sacrifice. God receive my offering!"

He raised his clenched hands above his head and stood an instant, glaring upon the bystanders like the incarnation of a curse. Then he strode with shaking steps to the side of the old altar, and before any one could stop him threw himself upon the stones. His frame quivered an instant as if a priest's knife were indeed turning in his heart. Soldiers lifted him, and flung him back upon the pavement.

The Jew had conquered. He had made his sacrifice to his God. Elkiah, the Nasi, the last of the Sanhedrin, was dead.

Deborah had essayed to follow her father when his captors took him from his house. A Greek officer seized her and forced her back.

"By all the gods of Greek and Jew, you shall not go!"

The speaker was Dion.

For a little her resolution seemed to yield before the imperiousness of her friend. But her spirit was as a Damascus blade which, suddenly bent, springs back into shape. With a wild cry, "I will go to my father; they shall not harm him!" she broke from Dion. His stronger arms regained her.

"You will not be harmed if you stay here," Dion said; "but both you and your father will perish if you go. None but I can save you, Deborah. By my love I entreat."

"Your love! your love!" There was utter contempt in her tone. "You, a hired slaughterer of our people!"

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"Nay, then by my strength you shall not go."

He grasped her wrists. The might of her soul was imparted to her arms, and she had nearly freed herself. It required a rough grip of even the athlete's strong hands to detain her. His hard fingers deeply indented her softer flesh. Her face was contorted with pain. Dion relaxed his hold, but not enough to allow her to escape.

So close they stood that their breaths mingled. If soul were breath, as the one Hebrew word for both signifies, it might be that their spirits touched and mingled also; for the fire slowly died from her eyes.

"You are stronger than I," she said, with panting breath.

"Forgive my use of force," replied Dion; "but I had to choose between offending and saving you. I have seen too many cruelties to dare to let you go from the door."

Deborah's look searched Dion to the heart. She spoke with slow accents, as if uncertain whether to venture the words:

"I will trust you, though a Greek. Let no harm come to my father."

"If man can save him, I will. But do you pledge me, Deborah, that you will not go to the streets. A flower would be safer thrown there under the feet of the mob than you among the soldiers. Pledge me, I beg you; pledge me."

"Then I will wait. But fly! oh, Dion, fly! Your word! Your sword if need be! My father! Oh, my father!"

Dion was gone.

As the Greek hurried away only the arm of the old servant Huldah prevented Deborah falling to

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the pavement. She moved close to the street door, but did not open it. There she stood, not unlike the statue of a runner whose whole attitude shows flight while the feet are motionless. She had almost broken her pledge and gone after Dion, but something held her back. Was it her word? She did not think of that. It was rather the word of the Greek; for had he not said, "If man can save him, I will"? She saw that in this man of hated race was the only hope. If he should fail, then God had willed the worst, and she would submit.

Submit? To what? To grief? To bereavement? Yes. To insult? Perhaps to death, for the assailants of her father would not spare his child.

But there was another submission she deliberately contemplated. It was submission to the overmastering passion which had been born last night amid the ruins of the house of Ben Isaac—to become a minister of vengeance for her people. She seemed to hear her father's voice above the din of the street calling her to avenge his name. The shades of the martyrs of Israel in her excited imagination trooped from Sheol, and stood around her as if to lay their hands upon her in ordination to a life entirely devoted to patriotism and religion; devoted, whether with her hands red in the blood of Israel's enemies, or white with nursing service of Israel's distressed people, she knew not, she cared not.

She was aroused from her reverie by the voice of Caleb.

"Sister, shall we not flee? Death is over the house. They have slain our father. I but now heard the passers-by say, 'Elkiah is dead.' "

"Flee, child? Whither can we flee? The angel of

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destruction hovers over us, his wings black, oh, so black! and over all the city, and over all the land. We are safe for the moment only here. We must wait on the Lord, and—on the Greek!"

"Has fear driven away your memory, sister dear?" said Caleb. "There are passages from our home into the great quarry which underlies the city."

"True, child, but we have never learned them."

"But I have. I go where those who can see find no way. From the cellar of our house a way opens into the cellar of our neighbor Moses, and from that into the cellar of Omri. They both fled that way. I heard them beg father to escape with them, but he would not. He declared that he would die in Jerusalem rather than flee so long as the altar of the Lord stood on Moriah. But the altar has fallen, sister; the people in the streets just now said that not a stone of it stood any longer. Were our father here, he would now flee. Come! Benjamin will be safe, since he has become as one of the Greeks, and Dion will care for him. Come! I can guide you, and God will guide me as He always has done. Come!"

"Nay, child, the daughter of Elkiah cannot leave her house while her father lives. He will return—or Dion."

"But our father will not come again," urged the child. "Did I not hear them say, 'The Jew is dead'? Come!"

"I will not believe it until Dion returns and tells me with his own lips. They will not, they dare not kill my father. Besides, I have given the Greek my word."

"Your word to a Greek! What is there in that?"

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"True, only my word to a Greek! To a Greek! Then let us go for your sake, child."

She followed the blind boy as he darted across the court to the door which opened into the servants' apartment, and thence into the cellar. At the entrance she stopped.

"Nay, child, I cannot go. I have given him my word."

"Trust not the Greek," cried Caleb. "He will not come back. He dare not if he would. They would kill him if he befriended us or our father. But hark!"

The blind boy stood in an attitude of listening. Then he cried excitedly, "Aye! He comes. I hear Captain Dion's voice in the street. He has turned the corner—now he is at the door."

Dion stood before them.

For a little he was speechless, as if the words he would speak were too cruel to utter. He did not even lift his eyes to the young woman's face.

"Do not speak, sir!" said Deborah. "I know it all. My father has been slain by your people."

"Nay, not slain," replied the Greek. "Your father's God has taken him. As Zeus lives—as Jehovah lives —Elkiah died as only the greatest and best of men can die; no hand struck the blow. On the steps of the altar of his God he himself gave up his life. The gods take the breath of such men with a kiss."

Deborah bowed herself upon the pavement.

"Aye, he was a sacrifice. Oh, my father!" Then she rose. Her eyes seemed to see the ascended spirit as she said slowly:

"Now I swear by thy white locks—by the altar of thy broken heart! I, too, will be a sacrifice!"

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The Greek was paralyzed by the sense of his helplessness to say or do anything to mitigate the woman's woe. Though he knew not what it meant, he knew that there was a tragedy in her heart as real as the one that had just occurred at the Temple.

Dion lingered to offer—what? Comfort? Help? Perhaps he acted simply from the instinct by which noble natures wait to give themselves to others for whatever may be needed. One thing he could do.

"Your father shall have honorable interment. I have secured from Apollonius the order that he be buried in the sepulchre of his fathers. With your brother's sickness and the hazard to your life and that of Caleb, I ask your permission that I may be his mourner."

"My thanks, good sir. And my father's God will bless you."

Still Dion lingered, until Deborah herself said:

"Captain Dion, you must go away. This house is no place for a Greek."

"Nay, it is the place for such a Greek as I. Let me help you. Tell me your desire, and it shall be done."

Deborah did not look at her companion. Advancing to the centre of the court where the sun gleamed fairly upon her, she raised her hand. It was not now the attitude of defense from danger such as Dion had seen before. It was not that of daring which had cowed the besotted Apollonius. It was that of supreme spiritual exaltation. It seemed to enlarge her physical form and to transfigure her countenance with the strong glow of inner light. Dion had seen the priestesses of almost every shrine among his own and foreign peoples, but nothing so

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august as this self-ordination of the Jewish maiden to her mysterious service, as she said in suppressed tones:

"Now, O God of my father, I will fulfill my vow! Lead Thou whither Thou wilt. Guide me as Thou hast all true sons and daughters of Israel. Amen!"

Then her eyes rested a moment upon Dion's. A faint smile, or rather the slightest yielding of the rigidness of her alabaster features, denoted a not unkind recognition. If her voice was softened, it lost no tone of determination as she repeated:

"You must go away. I shall need no further help."

"You know not what you say," replied Dion eagerly. "You are utterly helpless here. Your brother's name will not save you one moment from the danger which I know will follow you. You must flee. Can you conceal yourself for a little while? I will return with the dress of a Greek woman, and in that disguise I can take you to a place of safety."

"Nay, go you and bury my father," said she.

"Promise me that you will not pass into the street."

"I will not go—into the street."

"The gods be praised!" cried Dion. He seized her hand, and before she could withdraw it had pressed it to his lips. Then he hastened away.

Caleb had been a silent auditor of all this. Now he ran to his sister's side.

"Not with the Greek, Deborah, with me. You said, only, 'Not into the street'."

"Yes, I will go with you, child. And may your blind eyes see the way of the Lord!"

She passed into the chamber where Benjamin lay.

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The leech had pronounced his healing sure, though he was not yet recovered from his stupor. Deborah softly imprinted a kiss upon her brother's forehead. She glanced at the familiar objects in the apartment, most of which were sacred with memories. At length her eyes rested upon a little ivory shrine of the Greek Aphrodite, a token of the new religion her brother had embraced. Then she fled from the desecrated chamber.

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X

JUDAS MACCABÆUS

ERUSALEM crowns a massive ridge of rock. To the eye of the inhabitant this was a projecting portion of the very foundation of the earth; to his faith it was the symbol of the eternity of the Jewish religion. The rock is not, however, as solid as it seems. For ages it has served as the quarry from which the builders of walls and fortresses, pavements and palaces, have taken their material, leaving little more than the shell of the dome which first attracted the worshipful gaze of Abraham as he journeyed up from the south country. The rock of Moriah may then be taken as a symbol of the hollow formality into which the religion of Israel has at times degenerated. In the time of our story there were, beneath the streets and houses of the city, long labyrinthine passages that were unlighted except by the occasional lantern of an explorer or prowler, and vast chambers where no sound, save of some cautious footstep, had echoed since the click of the hammer of the Phœnician stone-cutter in the days of Hiram, the royal friend of Solomon, whose Tyrian artisans built the Temple.

In the flight of Deborah and Caleb, the lad led the way first to the upper cellar of the house of Elkiah. The floor of this was laid in well-squared blocks of white marble, cornered with smaller blocks in black,

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making an artistic pattern which could be discerned in the dim light that now fell upon it. In ancient times this cellar floor had been the pavement of an upper court, and opened to the full daylight; for Jerusalem had been again and again destroyed and rebuilt upon its own ruins.

Passing through this cellar the fugitives struck a series of winding stone steps which brought them to a sub-cellar. Here the darkness was dense. Caleb stood a moment with his hands extended, as if possessing eyes in his finger-tips.

"I have it. The air comes this way. I can feel it as it oozes up from the cracks about the loose trap-door, as easily as you, Deborah, could see the light around window shutters. Here is the trap. The stone tilts. It is hung on an iron bar. The big end of the stone rests on a rim, and is enough heavier to prevent the other end from sinking when one steps on it, but not heavier than you and I can lift. Uriah and I have often opened it, and he is no stronger than I am. Your fingers here, Deborah."

As the stone was tilted there came up a stream of damp, chilly air, which, Caleb said, was "the breath of the thousand toads and bats that live in the crannies below."

The blind boy leaped unhesitatingly into the black depths.

"It's smooth here, sister. The old Phœnicians swept up all their stone chips before they went home. I could run barefoot here without stubbing my toe."

Deborah let herself cautiously down into the darkness.

"Ah," said she, as she felt the solid level beneath

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her feet, "if we could only trust God as easily as I can trust my child!"

"But why shouldn't we, dear heart?" replied the boy. "God says, 'I will guide thee with mine eye.' Hasn't He done so with me?"

He took his sister's hand and led on boldly for a few paces.

"Wait. Yes, we turn this way, for the air comes from this direction. Stoop, sister! Uriah once bumped his head here. Now we are past it. Uriah said the roof here was twenty cubits high, and was held up by big pillars of the rock which hadn't been cut away. One day he lit a lamp in here, and the bats flew about like black shooting-stars. Listen! That's the water that comes from Solomon's Pools, down by Bethlehem; the same that spouts up in our fountain. And that drip, drip, drip—Uriah said it was the dying heart-beats of our nation. God make him mistaken for once! It's nothing but leaks. And——"

Caleb did not finish his sentence. Even Deborah exclaimed in alarm. A sharp cry rang through the cavernous passage. At the next instant Caleb was thrown from his feet. Something large, yet soft, brushed him. He heard the quick snapping of teeth, then a rustling beyond them, which suddenly ceased.

"It's only a fox. Uriah said that one day he chased one into the big crack in the north wall. Lots of them must live in here, or else foxes haven't got the wit they are thought to have."

A little further on the fugitives felt the air to be fresher and warmer. A light flickered in the distance. It seemed to Deborah to come through a window with shifting lattice-work.

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"That's the opening through the city wall, not far from the north gate," said Caleb. "It is covered up with bushes on the outside. That's the reason the soldiers haven't found it yet. The wind blows the bushes like a curtain, Uriah says, and it makes the light blink."

The exit from the cavern through the city wall was very narrow, a mere crevice between the great stones which some earthquake, or possibly the stroke of some battering-ram, had dislodged.

"Let me look out, sister. I can see with my ears without pushing the bushes."

Caleb lifted himself to the aperture, and crawled into it, where he lay for a moment as still as a lizard. He suddenly slipped down again to his sister's side.

"A sentinel is passing. He is a big, awkward fellow, for I hear his feet roll on the little stones. Now he has gone. The soldiers are afraid to come among the bushes or close to the walls, because the cracks in the stones are full of little adders. But they never harm me."

"The Psalm reads, " said Deborah, " 'Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder.' "

"But," rejoined the lad, "I don't even tread on them. One day, though, I put my hand on one, and he didn't bite me. Maybe that is what the Lord means, too."

"Yes," replied his sister, "for Esaias says, 'The sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the cockatrice's den.' But that is to be when Jerusalem is redeemed by a new David. God grant that your safety from these reptiles may mean that glorious

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days are near at hand. The Deliverer must come. He must come. Maybe we shall see Him, Caleb."

So they talked in whispers while the aperture grew dim with approaching night.

Caleb and Deborah did not venture to come out of the old city quarry until darkness had fully fallen, and the ray of a star shot its salutation to them through the crevice. When they emerged they stood for a long time close to the wall, screened by the bushes.

"How large the stars look!" whispered Deborah. "They hang as in mid-air; the constellations like ear-rings and necklaces on the invisible angels. They seem nearer than the camp-fires and tent lanterns of the Greeks on the hills yonder. So let us trust Heaven's help is nearer to us than our enemies."

"Amen!" rejoined Caleb.

Deborah glanced upward at the majestic march of what Caleb said were "God's Helmets," and then along the line of the Greek encampment, as she exclaimed, "O stars that fought in their courses against Sisera, fight against Apollonius!"

Caleb started, pressing his sister's hand. "Are the stars moving, sister?"

"No, child; it is but the night winds warring against the high walls of the city. The stars hear no command of the Lord as yet."

"But listen!" again interposed the excited child.

"No, that is only the wind among the olives in the old garden of Kedron," replied Deborah.

"But was there not once the 'sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees' that told David the Lord went before him to battle?" quoted the child.

"Oh, if God would be to us as thy faith, my

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child!" and Deborah stooped to kiss his forehead as they hurried away.

It was not difficult to avoid the soldiers, for, with the exception of an occasional sentry posted along the high road, the companies kept within their various camps. The Greeks had learned lessons in caution during their brief occupancy of Palestine such as had not been needed in the other countries they had subjugated. It was quite a common thing in the neighborhood of Jerusalem for sentinels never to return from their beats. Small companies of guards sometimes disappeared mysteriously, as if swallowed by earthquakes which made no rumble and closed their lips in silence. Even close to the camps men dropped in their tracks, while a stone, the size of one's fist, went clattering over the ground, leaving its mark in a broken skull or a mangled face; for the Jewish herdsmen were still as expert with the sling as they were in the days of David. Rumor attributed many of these daring exploits to a single family, five young men, the sons of a priest in Modin, chief of whom in this outlawry was Judas, reputed a giant.

Deborah and Caleb were comparatively safe, for they did not attempt the highways, nor even the beaten footpaths, but passed hastily across the stony fields, and glided crouching between the vine-rows on cultivated terraces. Now they paused to listen in the deeper shadows, by some gnarled olive whose dusky branches made the night darker; again, they hid behind the broad-bottomed cypresses if noise were heard; then, utterly wearied, they rested quietly for a few moments under the fig-trees.

Their course brought the fugitives beneath the

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frowning palisades of solid rock into which were cut the tombs of the Judges. These had no terrors for Deborah. Indeed, she lingered as if to commune with those departed spirits who might be near to the gates of Sheol listening for tidings from the upper world. Did these heroes of old still live? Were they unconscious of the awful fate that had fallen upon their land? Were there no powers among them which could return to the visible world and avenge the sorrows of those who are still forced to endure existence in the flesh? She remembered that once she had been poisoned by passing a noxious plant. Now she wondered if the other world had no destroying breath with which to slay the Greeks. Would not the soul of Elkiah, the righteous, stir up the abode of the dead by his coming, and by the story of his wrongs? Was Jehovah dead, too?

She condemned such thoughts as blasphemous and pushed on.

Only the stumbling of their feet against the stones broke the night silence.

At length dawn began to pour over the mountains of Moab. The jagged peaks far to the east, like prisms, unwound the white light and twisted its threads into robes of purple and orange, and transformed snowy points here and there into diamond and pearl. Deborah felt the inspiration of the scene. Surely the chariots and horses of God must charge from the sky, if Jehovah were indeed the "Lord of Hosts."

A noble hill rose before the fugitives; this was Mizpah. Here, as Deborah related, was where Samuel gathered the faithful to smite the Philistines, and down these very slopes God pursued the ene-

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mies of Israel with His thunders. Some one of these great stones might be the very stone Samuel had set up and called "Ebenezer," to commemorate the Lord's help. Oh, if she knew which it was, that she might kneel beside it, and repeat aloud the vow to serve her country's God!

On the hill gleamed the white, flat roofs of the houses of the little city of Mizpah, just showing themselves above the brown walls. Should she hasten onward? The fatigue of the long, excited tramp, the chill of the night, which the warm glow in the distant east seemed to drive deeper into their aching flesh, the human longing for companionship, and the hope of help urged her forward. She would enter Mizpah. There must be many there who had known Elkiah, and would protect his children.

But what was that which the dawning light made suddenly visible against the background of the walls? Alas! Deborah was too familiar with the ubiquitous banner flying from the spear-head. Mizpah, like Jerusalem, was occupied by the enemy. To go nearer was to court the very danger from which they were fleeing. But to flee again was too much for exhausted flesh. The shock of this discovery paralyzed her remaining energy. She tried to cling to the side of the rock against which she had been leaning. She fell fainting at its base.

Then the brain, too much excited, and unchecked by will, wrought its usual work. Memory and imagination became confused. The hill of Mizpah appeared to her repeopled with its ancient inhabitants. Old scenes of which she had read took the place of those she had just witnessed. The Greek tents became those of the ancient Philistines. Who

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should deliver Israel? She thought that the tall form of Saul, son of Kish, strode again along the slope of Mizpah, looking for his father's asses. Where was Samuel with the horn to anoint him king?

A full flash of the sun bursting over the eastern mountains revived her. Did it awaken her, or merely vitalize and make real her dream? She could not tell, for though this was Caleb sleeping by her side, surely yonder was Saul. His herdsman's dress could not disguise his kingly bearing. It needed not the prophetic gift of Samuel to distinguish the Lord's anointed. So stalwart was he, a head taller than most men; so majestic of mien; so noble of countenance. The apparition came near. It stood over her, taller than the rock, and seeming stronger. It bent down to her, and then it spoke:

"My children, why are you here?"

The voice aroused Caleb. His movement and the quick grasp of his sister's hand brought Deborah fully back from her dream. She pressed her eyes, if possible to press out any mere illusion; but the figure of Saul was still there.

He repeated his question, "Why are you here, children?"

Kindly he gave a hand to the startled girl. She grasped it, partly to discover whether it were real or a phantom; partly because she was so weak in flesh and will that she would have grasped any human hand that did not strike her or wear the mail of the hated Greek. She rose to her feet. The stranger started as if he, too, were uncertain whether this were not an apparition; for Deborah was not a child, as her face asleep had betokened, but now a

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woman. Into her youthful features the sharp suffering of a few days had put those lines which ordinarily come only of mature years and slow corroding care. Her black eyes had sunken deeper into their sockets. Their gleam seemed to be a reflection from some inner mirror of the soul, rather than a direct outlook,—that resilience of intense introspection which martyrs have in their eyes when they gaze upon those who have come to see them die.

The stranger's manner became that of reverential sympathy.

"My good woman, how came you here? And who are you? Where is your home?"

Deborah's uncertainty as to her own identity was at that moment nearly as great as that of her inquirer. She gazed intently into his face until she could assure herself that she was waking.

"My home, sir, is nowhere and everywhere. When the nest is destroyed the birds' home is on any tree or rock, and God provides for them. Such is our only refuge. I am a daughter of Jerusalem. We are children of Elkiah, son of Reuben."

"Then the news I have heard is true," exclaimed the man excitedly. "God of Israel, avenge thy murdered saints!"

The face of the stranger underwent a contortion that transformed it. Had Deborah seen this aspect first she had not dared to trust the man; so wrathful, so cruel he looked. But instantly his expression reverted to kindliness. There came into it a wonderful benignity. His eye was as clear a fountain of honesty and affection as the sun is of light. Every lineament also spoke of courage that matched the

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tremendous strength which his stalwart frame and protruding muscles displayed.

Deborah briefly narrated the events of recent hours.

"And you, sir? Who are you that dares speak kindly to one whom even God seems to have forgotten?"

"I am Judas, son of Mattathias, the priest of Modin. But it is enough that I am a son of Israel and your protector," showing a stout sword beneath his herdsman's goatskin shirt. "A few of us have given ourselves during these dangerous times to the help of the fugitives from the Sacred City, and I thank our Lord that He has directed me to this spot where I may serve the house of Elkiah. But here, my children, you cannot remain; nor can you enter the town yonder. You must go with me. I will see you safely among those who revere your father's name, and are brave enough to defend his children as they would their own."

He took the lad into his strong hands, and placed him astride his shoulder.

Avoiding the open places, and as much as possible keeping the rocks between them and Mizpah, he led the way down the hill, skirting its northern base. At length they struck the bed of a brook, which, though torn by the winter freshets, was now dry. Scarcely had they begun to follow its water-whitened stones when they were challenged. A Greek sentinel strode out before them.

"The password!"

Judas leisurely placed Caleb upon the ground. His bowed attitude was that of a lion when he is about to spring upon his prey, and, swift as the

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king of beasts, the Jew was upon the sentinel. Bending him backward, his iron grip was about the challenger's throat. In another instant the Greek's skull was shattered against a stone.

Judas stood a moment, grim as a fiend, contemplating his work. Then his lips moved:

"Forgive me, O my God! But was not my frenzy Thine, O Avenger of Israel?"

Gradually his harsh features relaxed. He glanced at his helpless charge, then at the dead body. He sat down and burst into tears.

"Demon or angel, into whose hands have I fallen?" murmured Deborah, for her rescuer seemed either less or more than man.

A moment later the opening between the rocks where they stood was shadowed. A Greek armor blocked the way.

Deborah uttered a cry of horror. Surely they were entrapped. But her guide advancing familiarly embraced the intruder. The stranger, removing his broad-brimmed Greek hat, showed a head marvelously like the other's; the same bristling red hair, broad forehead and decidedly aquiline nose. Though not so tall as Judas, the newcomer was equally broad-shouldered and as compactly built; his arms longer in proportion to the body; his calves more knotty. If Judas were a lion, this man was of a panther's build.

"The attempt succeeded, brother Jonathan?" inquired Judas.

"Perfectly," replied the seeming Greek. "I spent the night within the walls of Mizpah, and learned that Apollonius has about twenty thousand between Jerusalem and the sea."

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"So many? And we are a brood of partridges before the hawks."

"But Elijah's God is left, brother Judas."

"Aye, but there is no Elijah."

"Say not so. Elijah was not Elijah until God called him, and made him feel the truth his name signified,—Elijah, 'whose God is Jehovah.' And God can call whom He will, and whom He calls, He will empower. Gideon was hiding his wheat from the Philistines, when the Lord said, 'Go, in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel.' To whom may He not speak? And woe to the man unto whom the Lord speaks, if he shall not obey, though he be a Simon or a Judas. Our father's house is not like Gideon's, least in the tribe; nor are you, Judas, least in our father's house."

"Enough of this talk, Jonathan," replied Judas. "Our swords are only sharp enough to drink the blood of the enemies of the Lord; not bright enough to lead the host. Such words as yours savor of blasphemy. I will have none of them further. But these children of Jerusalem are in need. Take care of them. I must away. You have all the lads of Modin accounted for?"

"Every one at his station."

"No Greeks on Bethhoron?"

"Not out of the town walls, or their souls would flee their bodies as soon as their bodies left the covert."

"It is well."

Judas donned the Greek armor which his brother Jonathan had taken off.

"The Lord watch over you, my lady!"

His farewell was spoken with that mixture of

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humility and dignity which only men who are conscious of their own exaltation, either of rank or character, can exhibit in rendering service.

"Your father is Mattathias?' asked Deborah of Jonathan, when Judas was gone. "Is he not very old? Surely he has often been with my father in Jerusalem."

"Alas, Mattathias is old, or our cause would not lack a leader. But these events are too much for him. His life burns rapidly with the excitement, and the news of good Elkiah's death will make it burn the faster; for Mattathias is as old as Elkiah was, though less broken. Yet I well know that his life is only a breath of the Lord. Our father has five sons. Simon is the eldest and wisest; but there is that about our Judas which marks him for the leader. To his care is due the fact that these hills are so guarded that not even a little waif of Judaism like that blind child can lose his way. But Judas does not yet believe in himself. The Lord open his eyes, or send us another leader, else the people will perish. But you should rest."

Jonathan sought for his charge a little nook in the side of a ravine. Even the hard ground was inviting, for Deborah's limbs ached sorely from the unaccustomed strain of the past few hours. The quiet of the dell, and the knowledge that eyes as friendly as they were sharp watched over her, came as a sweet relief from the incessant fright of their journey. Long time she lay endeavoring to catch some of the calm out of the white clouds that floated above her; or listening to the hum of insects and the calls of birds, while she thanked God that there were creatures less savage than man. At length nature as-

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serted its claim, and, with Caleb in her arms, she fell asleep. Jonathan came and threw over them a coarse outer garment such as the better class of peasants wore; but the fugitives were as unaware of their friend's deeds as of the thoughts which passed through his mind when from time to time he came and stood awhile beside them. Darkness fell. Their guardian let them sleep.

It was past midnight when he roused them, and the journey was resumed. Over hills and across ravines, avoiding the usual footpath, they toiled on, Jonathan carrying Caleb on his shoulder, and Deborah borrowing strength of limb from her indomitable spirit, until the stars faded in the dawning light.

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XI

THE PRIEST'S KNIFE

TOWARD noon of the next day the party came near to the little city of Modin. They paused to take in the view from an adjacent hilltop. Far to the west glistened the waters of the Great Sea, bordered by the blazing yellow of the sand-dunes that divide that vast blue waste from the rich plains of Sharon. The brief chill of winter had not despoiled this fertile tract of the beauty in which the other seasons had arrayed it. Yonder glowed the white walls of Lydda, like a pearl in a setting of emerald. Many quiet villages looked out from beneath their brows of dusky olive-trees, and gardens sent their challenge of life to the gray limestone rocks which seemed to bind the hills in sterility.

At length Deborah's gaze was diverted from this fascinating view by a strange sight. A conical knoll rises before Modin. This was crowded with an excited multitude. The gay attire of some of the people proclaimed a festival, while the movements of others upon the outskirts of the crowd were rather suggestive of an angry mob than of a happy concourse. Upon the summit of the knoll stood an altar. It was made of wood, but painted to resemble ivory ornamented with bands of gold. Its graceful shape supported a basin or brazier of burning coals.

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The altar was surrounded by a detachment of Greek soldiers mingled with a small group of civilians. These latter were of various races: Phœnicians from the coast, who happened to be detained in Modin by their business as traders; men of Moab and other strolling tribesmen from beyond the land of Judea, who had less contempt for the frivolous rites of the Greek than hatred of the severer worship of the Jews, which they were willing to see supplanted; Samaritans, whose kinsmen at Shechem had already obeyed the commands of Antiochus, and offered heathen sacrifice upon their temple heights of Gerizim; and renegade Jews, only too willing to believe that the new religion was favored of heaven, since its observance on their part brought them immunity from confiscation of goods and bodily harm. In the crowd were a score or more women, the camp-followers of the Greeks, whose tawdry finery afforded a rather pleasing contrast with the polished metal and stiff forms of the soldiers. All were crowned with sprigs of ivy, for the rite now in progress was in honor of Bacchus. Female flute-players, with skirts split to their thighs, led the dance, and were followed about by companies of half-drunken men and youths, who observed so much of the steps as their unsteady legs permitted.

Avoiding this crowd, Jonathan brought Deborah and Caleb near to the gate of the town. Here was a very different scene. The native populace swarmed under the shadow of the wall. It was evident that these people were of a temper utterly hostile to that which swayed the devotees about the altar of Bacchus. In the centre of this crowd stood an officer of the King. By his side was the herald, who had

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just completed reading a proclamation commanding all persons above twelve years of age to make an offering to Bacchus before the sun should set, under penalty of being put to death.

The cruel mandate evoked cries of fright and fury from the people. Some shrieked wildly with alarm, well knowing the terrible alternative of apostacy or death, and knowing also that in almost every household there were those who would deliberately choose the latter. Some cursed deeply, and glared upon the officials with eyes not unlike those of wild beasts answering the challenge of their captors. Then uprose that strange lamentation in which Eastern people are accustomed to express their grief—agonized outcries accompanied by tearing the hair, rending garments, and flinging handfuls of dust in the air.

In the throng was an old man. Though many years had whitened his locks, his form was erect and evidenced the strength and vigor of well-kept manhood. His face was strikingly beautiful, its lineaments such as are formed only by the habit of lofty thinking and gentle impulses. Deborah could not but recall the faces of her two guides from Mizpah, which this one resembled.

"Venerable sir," said the Greek officer, "you are ruler here, and as their priest high in honor among this people. Your words they obey. Your example they follow. You are their shepherd. Why should you lead them into needless calamity? Come, then, and fulfill the King's demand. It is but a little thing required of you; not to disobey your nation's God, but to recognize the gods of others. Surely, some power beyond our own makes the vine grow, and fills its clusters with wine. Call that power

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Bacchus, or think of it by the nameless name of your own God—what matters it? Recognize that power by casting a pinch of incense upon the altar. Pray as you please in the depths of your soul; only do this little act. Will you lead the people to slaughter for so simple a thing as a crushed berry of spice, or drop of oil from a pressed olive? The great King Antiochus would delight to favor with riches the noble Mattathias, of whose devotion to Jewry he has heard so much; and he longs to have such faithful servants as you and your stalwart sons to promote his own generous rule over these lands which the gods have given him."

The King's officer would have proceeded further, but the impatience of the old man prevented him. Raising his voice, he cried out:

"Let Antiochus know, that, though all nations that are now under the King's dominion obey him, and fall away every one from the religion of their fathers, yet will I, and my sons, and my brethren walk in the ancient covenant. We will not hearken to the King's words, to go from our religion, either to the right or to the left."

"The priest is mad with bigotry, and would destroy us. Let us go and sacrifice," said one, moving from the crowd toward the altar on the knoll.

Mattathias gazed upon the renegade. A look of unutterable pity overspread his features.

"Thou shalt not sin thus against the Lord our God, brother Laban," said he, as he laid his strong hand upon the other's shoulders.

"Is Mattathias still a priest to kill as if we were sheep for sacrifice? Unhand me, lest I smite thee in spite of thy years," said Laban.

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"Aye, a priest still," cried the old man, suddenly transported with rage, "priest still to sacrifice. It is better that the dust of the ground of our Holy Land receive the blood of Laban than that the altar of the heathen receive his offering."

He drew from his robe a priest's knife and drove it into the heart of the traitor.

As the body fell the venerable man broke out into lamentation, "Oh, my brother Laban, why didst thou drive me so mad? O my God, forgive me, save me! Save Thy people!"

The King's officer sounded an alarm, and soldiers hastened from the adjacent knoll. But these were soon overpowered by the infuriated mob of Jews; and from the mêlée was dragged forth the dead body of the Greek Commandant himself.

Mattathias stood a moment and gazed upon the bruised and bleeding form of the officer. Then he raised his hands and, with face uplifted to the white clouds that floated above, he cried:

"O God of Israel, forgive Thy priest! Forgive Thy people if they have this day been led into sin. But Thou, Lord, knowest our hearts. The zeal of Thine house hath eaten us up!"

Then he turned to the people. All fury suddenly died from his features. Instead there came a look of wonderful compassion and solicitude. It was as the clear azure following the thunder-storm.

"To your homes, friends! To your closets! Let no one eat this day, but with fasting let us spread our woes before the Lord. I know, I know that He will appear for us. For we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. But alas! who shall be the Avenger?"

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XII

THE FORT OF THE ROCKS

T the bidding of Mattathias, the people passed hurriedly into the town. The stones of the street were torn up; some of them piled in heavy masses against the city gates; others carried to the walls, ready to be hurled down upon assailants. In vain did those returning from the knoll, where they had taken part in the heathen worship, seek admission. Their rapping and calls to their fellow-townsmen were answered by taunts. Mattathias insisted on their exclusion, lest there should be division in counsel and action, while he foresaw that there was no alternative other than fighting for their lives, or voluntarily surrendering themselves to the atrocities of the foe. A low wail of lamentation could be heard from hundreds of homes, like the murmur of a torrent. Now and then it broke into a sharp cry of defiance from maddened groups on the house-tops, as a torrent leaps and splashes high in air over some sharp obstacle that opposes its course.

The night that followed was one of fearful expectancy in Modin. The news of the assault upon the King's representative might bring the Greek soldiers, who were scattered along Bethhoron, in retaliatory vengeance. But the sentinels on the walls made no alarms. The next day the extemporized scouting parties reported no hostile movement.

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But it was certain that the authorities at Jerusalem would not long delay a blow which would vindicate their power, and the honor of the monarch.

In the little town all was confusion, for the inhabitants made preparations to migrate from their now insecure homes. The excitement increased as from the hills and valleys around their herdsmen hastily gathered the flocks, and drove them close to the city.

On the second night strange sounds floated everywhere through the darkness—the lowing of cattle, bleating of sheep, braying of asses, and the occasional grunt of camels resenting the unseemly hour of their lading. These moved eastward through the darkness, and later were followed by an exodus of the inhabitants from the town. Deborah noted the women, whose hands had scarcely lifted heavier weight than the distaff, now bowed beneath bulky loads of household stuff. Boys carried jars of provisions as big as themselves. Men, armed with swords, javelins, bows, and bludgeons, led the way, or deployed as guards on flank and rear of the unsteady column.

In the confusion little notice was taken of Deborah and Caleb, except as some one peered into their faces in the endeavor to identify them. They trudged along with a group of women and children, old men and cripples, whose slow pace excited impatience and an occasional unkind taunt from the stronger limbed.

In the company with Caleb hobbled a lad some years older than he. The feet of this boy were strangely malformed. Both were so twisted from their normal relation to his legs that his toes

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pointed very nearly backward. This infirmity and the weight of his heavy wooden sandals were, however, largely compensated for by the boy's muscular strength and alertness of faculty. With the aid of a stick, crotched at the upper end, he swung himself along the road and over obstacles in the fields which tangled legs better than his own. Only by the harsh words and cuffs of the men who were leading or guarding the multitude was the boy kept with the weaker folk. Now some sentinel, with hand to ear, pausing, and listening for the remotest sound of approaching soldiery, was startled by the rattling of the stones under the boy's feet and crutch. Now, again, he was hobbling along with the rear guard as valiantly as if his stick were the sword of Goliath of Gath.

Through the dim night the lame lad noticed that Caleb's gait was different from that of the others. His occasional stumbling and his clinging to his sister's hand excited the curiosity of his observer.

"Say, are you lame, too?" the strange boy asked.

"No, I am only blind, the Lord be praised!" replied Caleb.

"Only blind! Whew!" and a long whistle threaded the stillness of the march.

"Silence!" said a gruff voice.

"Can't you see a bit?"

"No, not as you see."

"Haven't you any eyes?" and the boy drew Caleb's face close to his. "Oh, such big eyes! and can't see? But such eyes must see somewhere. Maybe they are like my feet, that look in the direction they aren't going. Can't you see the inside of your head?"

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Caleb laughed, and fell in with the mirthful mood of his companion.

"They say I can see out of my ears and from my finger ends."

"I shouldn't wonder," replied the lame boy. "And can you see as well in the dark as in the light?"

"Just as well."

"Whew!"

"Silence there!"

"Say, couldn't you and I have fun with the jackals?"

There was a pause.

"Say, can you see"—and the boy's voice sunk to a whisper—"can you see God? Or maybe the angels? What are they like? Like Judas? or old Mattathias? or like—like your sister there?"

Caleb protested against his companion's irreverence and ignorance.

"Well, at any rate, the angels see you."

"How do you know they do?"

"Because, blind as you are, you do not stumble half as much as I do. There, you stepped right over that rock that I nearly broke my heels on; and the Psalmist said of somebody, 'that the angels keep him from stubbing his toes.' Those are not the words, but something like them. But how can the angels lift you over the stones if they can't see you? Eh! But what's your name?"

"Caleb. What's yours?"

"Solomon; but they don't call me that. They call me Mephibosheth, because Mephibosheth was lame in his feet; that is, they call me Meph because the whole word takes too much breath, and folks need all they've got, especially in such travelling as this."

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The night wore wearily away. Once old Mattathias joined the little group, but only for a few moments; for though the conduct of the expedition was left to the younger men, chiefly his five sons, the responsibility of the movement rested with the venerable priest. Once Judas came to them, but it was only to insist that the daughter of Elkiah should make use of a rude palanquin, which two strong-limbed men carried between them upon two poles. This Deborah refused, and, footsore and weary though she was, trudged by its side while the bearers conveyed a sick woman with her babe at her breast.

In the early dawn the fugitives threaded the wild, narrow ravine in the neighborhood of Michmash, once the scene of the adventures of Prince Jonathan, during the wars of Saul against the Philistines. As the day advanced, women and children sought rest and shelter among the caverns and chasms which made that region frightful in days of peace, but a welcome retreat to those whom the troublous times had ejected from better homes. Here, at Judas' advice, Mattathias decided to halt the little host. All fell to work building the defenses which they would surely need in coming dangers, and which became ever after famous as the eyrie whence the Maccabæan eagles, those sons of Mattathias, swooped down upon the Syrian prey.

Rapidly the natural rocks grew into an orderly fortification. Loose stone walls were built between the outcropping ledges, until a vast space was enclosed and divided into compartments, where a few defenders could withstand many assailants, and to capture which would be for the victors to fasten

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themselves into slaughter pens. Across the top of the natural chasms were laid poles covered with brushwood, which screened the people from the sun by day and from the dews by night. Great boulders scattered over the adjacent fields were connected by ditches, which were so roofed that, while they effectually obscured those passing beneath, they were at the same time pitfalls for any intruders. Each great rock thus became an outlying fortress, behind which, day and night, lay wary men.

At one place was a rude forge, where all sorts of iron implements were wrought into weapons; reversing the ancient prediction, for plowshares were now beaten into swords, and pruning-hooks into spears.

Day by day even the women and children were practised in archery, and learned to hurl the javelin and sling stones; while the men were drilled in companies to execute manœuvres which the genius of Judas devised, and which were especially adapted to warfare in the craggy battlements of the hills. Far and wide scouts answered one another with mysterious signals, quick flashes at night, and sounds by day in which the cries of birds and beasts were imitated according to a code prepared by Jonathan. The country for leagues about was thus practically under one eye and one voice of command.

One evening Judas came to the little enclosure of rocks which the respect and sympathy of the people had assigned to the privacy of Deborah. It was screened by a coarse matting, which served both as door and wall.

"This is no place for the daughter of Elkiah," said the young man. "I have come to ask that you allow half a score of our brave men to escort you to

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a spot of more safety and comfort. The strong castle of Masada, in the wilderness by the Sea of Salt, will prove impregnable to any attack. The journey will not be more difficult than remaining here."

Deborah expressed her gratitude. She looked at the upturned face of Caleb. It was pale and emaciate with fatigue and exposure.

"Surely, this is no place for the lad," she said, as she held his cheeks between her hands.

"As soon as the shadows darken the ravine yonder you will start?" inquired Judas.

Deborah for a moment made no response. She gazed upon the women and children about her.

"And these?"

"They must remain where they are, and share the fortunes of the men. It would be unsafe to move so many. Besides, the castle is a little one, and would not hold them. But you, if I mistake not, as the daughter of Elkiah, have claims of kinship with Ben Aaron, who occupies Masada."

Deborah sought the sky as if in prayer; then she said:

"Judas, call me no longer the daughter of Elkiah. Call me now only one of the daughters of Israel. Why should I flee to the castle when these, as worthy as I, have no such refuge?"

"But surely——"

"Nay, do not entreat me. Tell me, Judas, have you not a vow to live or die in defense of Israel?"

"Truly, as God lives!" said he, raising his right hand.

"Would you break your vow? Nay, do not answer. And I, too, have a vow—to die if God will

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take the sacrifice, with His people. Here I can serve, if not with those who fight, then with those who watch and care for the helpless. Take the lad, but here I must stay."

Caleb, who had been a listener, now uttered a cry such as never escaped him except when in some agony of pain. He flung himself into his sister's arms. No word passed between them, but there is a converse of hearts that needs no speech. She loosened his embrace.

"It is His will. My child, we shall not be separated. We will both stay."

Scarcely had she said this when cries of alarm rose without. Judas was instantly gone.

In an hour came Meph, utterly winded with his haste, but he managed with detached mouthfuls of breath to give the report of a wonderful encounter with the enemy. He declared that—

"The Greeks came along—a whole army of them—marching as stiff as a grove of palm-trees—shields on one shoulder and pikes on the other. All of a sudden whiz! whiz! whiz!—and they dropped in their tracks—lots of them did—as if they were bulrushes. The rest of them closed up, and put their shields together like a tent; but rocks came down on them like hailstones—and they broke and ran like hares."

With his crutch Meph mapped on the ground the plan of the battle, and then appealed to Caleb to predict that such a magnificent victory would be the end of the war. "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon is with us! The sword of the Lord and of Judas!" and he whirled his crutch in pantomimic extermination of the foe.

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But, alas, such engagements were to be the almost daily experience of the patriots. The Greek bands were worsted by the intense bravery of the Jews, and the more shrewdly laid plans of their untrained but heaven-gifted leaders. In resisting these forays, and in their devoted care of the threatened people, the five sons of Mattathias won the titles which history has added to their names—John, the *Good;* Simon, the *Wise;* Judas, the *Hammerer;* Eleazar, the *Sunburst;* and Jonathan, the *Crafty.*

The incessant excitement wrapt the popular mind with a frenzy of religious enthusiasm and credulity. Much of the time was spent in prayer and song. The devoted people saw in the skill of their earthly champions only a fuller measure of that Divine Spirit whose impulse gave wisdom and valor, and whose invisible Presence was a surer defense than ten thousand phalanges of shields. As in the days of Elijah, so once more ardent souls saw, as Deborah had done, "the chariots of Israel and the horses thereof" in the embattled clouds at sunset and sunrise; and God in armor strode among the spectres of the night.

In such experiences, in which mental exaltation put on physical prowess, and the spiritual world was inwoven with the material—as we may believe the soul is knit with the body—passed a year in the "Fortress of the Rocks."

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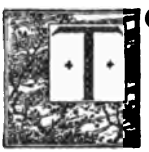
XIII

DAUGHTER OF THE VOICE



O Deborah this was a year of mighty transformation. The traces of girlhood were worn from her face by the hardness of her daily life. Her sparkling eyes deepened and steadied their fire. Her features became more immobile and rigid under the stress of her one persistent thought and purpose. Even her body was changed. She was taller. The rounded contour of her form became more masculinely muscular. The graceful carriage of the maiden, brought up in the elegance of Elkiah's home, was somewhat lost in the heavier tread and more angular movement developed by bearing burdens with her humbler sisters in the rude encampment, and even by training at arms with the men.

Yet, if less fair and maidenly, she was more nobly beautiful than ever before. Could Dion have seen her, he would have thought her more like Athena than when he first saw her at Elkiah's gate. Hers was now a head for a helmet rather than for ornaments. Armor would have fitted her figure as well as robes.

To her people she had become the incarnation of patriotism. They gave her the sacred appellation, "The daughter of Jerusalem," the name by which the ancient prophets had designated the nation.

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Even old Mattathias gazed upon her as if to take from her face some sign of that diviner will he prayed daily to know. To the maiden's words he would listen as to the counsel of his battle-trained advisers.

On one subject, however, the venerable leader was inexorably opposed to her wishes. She asked that she might be permitted to wear the armor of the soldier, and join in the battles. The old priest replied in the words of the ancient law:

"The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all that so do are an abomination unto the Lord thy God."

To this prohibition he was led to make one conditional exception—that in the event of the Fort of the Rocks being taken by the enemy, any disguise which might enable her to escape the danger peculiar to a captured woman might be used.

"If," replied Deborah, "for the safety of one woman the letter of the law may be set aside, why not for the safety of Israel?"

"You are right, my daughter. Should Israel need you, robe yourself as you will, yet remember it will be as when a victim is arrayed for the sacrifice. But with our brave men about you surely there is no need for you to mingle in the common fray. Your womanly presence now encourages us more than a band of swordsmen."

"But if—if"—Deborah hesitated in speaking—"but if the Voice should bid me?"

"The Voice! The Voice!"

Mattathias bowed his head upon his breast. "The Bath-kol! The daughter of God's voice! I may not

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dispute that Monitor; for only those anointed of heaven can hear it."

"How may one know the Voice? Explain to me the sacred Bath-kol"—and Deborah leaned forward, her hand upon the patriarch's knee and her face upturned toward his in reverent and eager inquiry.

Mattathias put his hand upon her forehead. "Alas!" he said, "I fear that the Voice has not been heard by any in our generation, for the days are too full of evil. God's voice is wordless; or rather, shall I say, the Eternal Word is voiceless. The Divine Mind shines through the mind of man as the lightning through the clouds. But since Malachi fell asleep, no soul of man has been so pure that it could transmit the heavenly glory and interpret its meaning.

"Yet," he continued, after a pause, "it may be that the Lord still teaches His own by indirection, by what we call the Daughter of the Voice; the echo of the heavenly from earthly things. Some of our wisest rabbis have held that, after one has prayed, the first words that fall upon the ear, especially if they be sacred words from the Law, the Prophets, or the Psalms, may be such echoes of the Divine Will. But in these matters I am unskilled. I only know that if God may not speak to a soul so true as thine, beaten pure by affliction, as the oil is beaten for the lamps of the sanctuary, then, indeed, are we left without the light."

Such words confirmed a conviction already vaguely felt by Deborah. She recalled her tremendous emotion that night amid the ruins of the house of Ben Isaac. She knew nothing of those psychological laws by which she might have accounted for

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her experience without attributing it to Divine suggestion. She had often observed how the atmosphere, hot above the fire, becomes hazy and tremulous, so that objects seen through it are distorted; but she did not know that her overheated mind might render it just as uncertain a medium for thoughts.

A few days after her conversation with Mattathias, the venerable man, shaken by age, and by the strain of duties that would have broken the energy of the youngest and strongest, laid himself down to die.

Earth has witnessed few scenes so humanly sublime as that in the rock-formed chamber, where the priest and warrior committed his work to his children, and his soul to God.

His sons knelt around the couch. To them he gave special counsel, correcting the weakness or encouraging the peculiar strength which his prophetic soul saw in each. For Jonathan he invoked caution; for Simon, courage; for all, faith in the Presence of the Lord, "who," said he, "will surely appear for our deliverance. But by whose arm will He smite? I know not. And yet——"

He looked long upon Judas. He put his thin hands upon his son's head. Then his own uplifted face became strangely luminous—doubtless as once was that of Moses. His lips parted as if they were burdened with some glorious prophecy; but they uttered no further word. There issued from them only—his soul.

They laid the body of Mattathias back upon the couch. A light seemed for a while to glow about his head, and then to be absorbed into the marble whiteness of his features.

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Never was funeral cortege of warrior or monarch more impressive than that which wound among the hills far away to Modin, watched by hostile eyes, and guarded by the sharp swords of a band of patriots who determined that their dead chieftain should not be deprived of burial in the sepulchre of his fathers. The mournful train was accompanied for a short distance from the Fort of the Rocks by the entire multitude of women and children, wailing with low outcries, rending their garments, and flinging handfuls of dust into the air until the armed procession was out of sight.

The soul of Deborah had been too mightily stirred by these occurrences to allow her to speak much with her people. A deep ravine hard by became sacred to her as a place of meditation. There was something in the very formation of this place that helped her thought. An enormous rock projected many feet from a precipitous palisade, and overhung the narrow width of the ravine. It seemed about to fall and crush her as she sat beneath it. Yet she knew that it could not fall, for the mass of visible stone was more than counterbalanced by a larger proportion of the rock imbedded out of sight, in the hillside.

"So," she said, "I am always under impending danger. A black shadow is always on my soul. But I can trust the unknown goodness of the Lord, which outweighs and prevents the threatening evil!"

There, as in her sanctuary, she one day sat down to think and pray. How wearied she was with her woman's work in the camp! Had there been about her the duties and affections of a home, it would have been different; for she was made to love, and

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love intensely. What a wealth of devotion she poured upon her blind brother! Yet his care did not furnish sufficient diversion for her excited brain and heart.

The form of her father was, alas! now only a memory. It was always with her; but it drained her soul, as the dry desert drinks up the streams that come from the mountains, and yet remains a desert, flowerless, fountainless.

Her brother Benjamin? Ah, it is hard to love where we do not respect; and while she would have given her life for his had emergency required, the thought of him made her more lonely, since even brotherhood was soiled with impiety and treason.

If Dion's friendship now and then flashed a pleasing thought through her mind, it was only like a warm glow in the dark cloud of her prevailing mood, and as quickly gone. Yet she was startled when she noted how frequently that brightness shot through the cloud; and she put herself under inner penance after each recollection of the noble-hearted Greek. Indeed, she tried to hate him for his offered love. It seemed incongruous, hypocritical, for a Greek to be so generous and good. A Greek! Her soul tortured itself with detestation of that whole racial type; yet somehow the man persisted in standing out from his race, as a vein of gold gleaming from its bed of baser earth. By strong effort she drove his image from her imagination. It was not probable that they would meet again; and if they did, he would see now no helpless girl appealing to his pity, but a woman, strong and vengeful, whose words would provoke his

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hatred of her as the embodiment of her hated people.

So, as she had said, her heart was empty—empty of all things that ought to furnish a woman's nature. She seemed to herself an unsexed soul, a mass of reckless, excited energy which could find repose only in outward action. Oh, to be a man, strong of arm, as tireless as daring! She looked with contempt upon her feminine attire, which she thought no longer fitted her changed nature.

If she might not march in the ranks of the soldiers, why could she not engage in the secret service of which she had heard Jonathan, the Crafty, speak as necessary to their defense? She might act as a spy. The little band of patriots could not hope to hold out ultimately against the overwhelming numbers that Antiochus would send, unless their valor were seconded by deep plotting.

To act the part she contemplated would require her to assume various attire. Would not heaven grant her dispensation from the letter of the law that made it a shame for a woman to put on a man's apparel?

Such thoughts surged through her soul as she sat in the ravine. At length she knelt and consecrated herself again—as she had done a hundred times—to her people's God. With mute lips and phraseless purpose she waited upon the Lord to know His will. Oh, for some assurance that it was right to follow her own intent!

The silence was for a time unbroken. At length a strange sound smote upon the ear. It was like nothing she had ever heard—a ringing note that seemed to come from the ground. Now another

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of different tone; and another still. These sounds were repeated in an order that suggested the notes of the music with which the players on instruments at the Temple accompanied the chanting of the familiar hymn:

"Awake! Awake, Deborah! Awake! Awake! utter a song!"

Neither harp, nor lute, nor tabret, nor cymbal could have produced these sounds. It was as if the rocks themselves had become mighty timbrels, and were stricken by some spirit of the woods. Surely this must be of superhuman agency: the noise was so unearthly, and the notes so clearly belonged to the words they suggested. It was not a voice; yet surely it was the Bath-kol, the Echo, the Daughter of the Voice, of which the now sainted Mattathias had spoken.

She prostrated herself among the gnarled roots of a great terebinth that projected from the side of the ravine as if they were the horns of an altar. So, too, her soul clung to her Lord. She prayed in words that His will might be her will. Perhaps in thought she prayed that her will might be His will—a distinction she was too unskilled in moral anatomy to note.

Again and again with ecstatic fervor she murmured her oft-repeated vow, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God!" She lay some moments in almost a trance of seraphic peace. This was changed to seraphic fury. Jehovah had accepted her. She was to be His messenger—a messenger of fire, of dagger, of deceit toward Israel's foes, as well as of consolation to His people.

She rose, and stood with hands clasped behind

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her, her face upturned to the glowing line of light that spanned the ravine. She drank in the brightness as heaven's approbation.

How long she remained in that attitude of rhapsody she did not know. The spell was suddenly broken.

"There she is! Here, Caleb, is Deborah! Give me your hand, or she will be gone ere we reach her," cried Mephibosheth to his blind friend, as, spying Deborah at a distance, the children tried to reach her. But thus startled, she walked too fast for the lame boy, encumbered as he was with the care of his comrade.

"Well, let her go. It is enough that she is safe," said Caleb.

The boys had spent an hour in a favorite haunt in a field of great boulders that lay just at the brink of the ravine. These stones were of volcanic origin, and a proportion of metal had entered into their composition. The lads soon found that when they were struck with smaller stones they emitted semi-musical sounds, and they were not long in playing upon them crude imitations of the tunes with which they were familiar. Caleb would sit by one that gave a deep ring, while Meph with a stone and his crutch could reach two others.

"I thought when we played 'Awake, Deborah!' we would start her," said Meph.

"So we did," replied Caleb, and reaching his hands up to his comrade's shoulders, with a spring and a boost, he was instantly astride them, a saddle that the good-natured cripple had often provided for his more unfortunate friend when the way was rough.

In the counsel of the Fort of the Rocks Deborah

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that night related to Judas, Simon and Jonathan the story of the strange sounds she had heard in the ravine.

Simon shook his head and remained silent, glancing solicitously at the girl, as a physician might study one suspected of dementia. Judas quickly avowed his belief that God was again speaking to His people as in the ancient days of faith. The after debate between these brothers was decided by the words of Jonathan, the Crafty.

"If," said Jonathan, "Simon be right in ascribing this to the maiden's madness, still it does not follow that Judas is wholly wrong. Does not the Lord use even our dreams, when our minds are astray from their waking wisdom? If He make the ass to correct the prophet, why should He not use the vagary of this most pious woman? We need such service as she proposes. My voice is that we put no restraint upon her becoming our spy, lest peradventure we be found to fight against the will of Him who, it may be, is impelling her to this duty."

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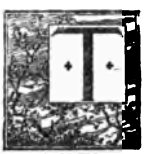
XIV

THE SPY



HE vale of Shechem is the fairest in Palestine. It is a long strip of meadow scarcely two hundred yards wide, guarded, as by two sleeping giants, by the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim, which cut the sky between two and three thousand feet above. For four furlongs of its length the valley lies like an emerald, broken by silver streams and sparkling basins of water. Beyond, for an equal distance, the bright green gives place to the gray foliage of olive groves, until the natural glory fades into the staring white houses of the town. In shady nooks and sunny glades the earth bursts with flowers of every hue, as if Flora had danced and left her fabled footprints impregnate with germs of beauty. If one be sated with the fairness that lies at one's feet, let the eyes rest upon the terraces of olive and grape, fig and prickly pear which relieve the precipitous sides of Ebal, the ancient Mountain of Cursing; or upon the swelling domes of rock which make the impressive mass of Gerizim, the Mountain of Blessing.

Even Apollonius, the desecrator of Jerusalem, with his eyes dimmed with the rheum of many debauches, must have delighted in the prospect; for midway the vale rose his gorgeous pavilion. From its door, when not enamored of nature, he could feast his

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pride upon the white and blue tents of his army, which gleamed far up the slopes of either mountain. In reward for his service in desolating the Jewish capital, and in many ways acting as a sort of procurer for the pride, greed, and lust of his royal master, Epiphanes had made Apollonius Governor of Samaria, and commander of all the king's forces in Syria.

Into his camp at Shechem had come not only brave warriors, but many merchants, to purchase the prospective spoil of the invaders. Women, too, some the wives of officers, others adventuresses, flaunted their gay attire amid the flashing helmets and spears of the soldiery.

Before the great General's pavilion stood his steed, a gigantic charger, with arching neck and restive eyes, now sniffing the hand of his groom, and anon rearing as if to break from his custody. Near by was a heavy-wheeled, but light-bodied chariot, its seat cushioned in creamy silk. At its pole waited a span of graceful roans, glittering in harness buckled and bossed with gold.

At the opening of the tent sat Apollonius, in full armor, except that his head was bared. Upon a couch just within reclined a woman. At a glance one would have said that she was of great beauty. Her features failed perhaps of the finest proportions that mark the classic Greek face; the nostrils too distended; the mouth too large; forehead high, but masked with abundant auburn locks, which were braided down almost to the eyebrows. Chiselled in marble that face would not have been an Aphrodite; but flushed as it was at the moment with excitement, her eyes sparkling with latent coquetry, and

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her slightly parted lips curved with a sensuous suggestion, she was sufficiently fascinating to the degenerate taste of the Greek officers passing the tent, who stole not unwelcome glimpses at her fairness.

"And what, pray, my lord Apollonius, is to be my portion of the spoil you are to take? I have no taste for the blood of the Jews, which you say your sword will draw from these Maccabæan peasants. A draught of wine—if only the cup were golden and I might keep it—would please me better. But no golden cups and no goodly garments will you get from these beggarly people. Some clouts and a few of the sickles they use for swords will scarcely grace the victory of one whom the king has honored for his valor."

"I see," replied the General, "that my fair one has grown weary of her lord, and that I need to freshly bribe her favor. Will not the gift of yesterday suffice to keep my Helena's patience for a day or two to come?"

The General toyed with a silver serpent with eyes of ruby, which encircled her arm. After a moment's pause, watching closely his companion as if studying the effect of his words, he added:

"If the trumpery of Jewish housewives please you not, there is better spoil in Jerusalem."

"Is anything left there?" languidly asked the woman, looking at her shapely wrist and hand.

"Much. And it is game that will give zest to the catching. Listen! Since my fair goddess has tired of me, I propose that she shall find another lover more to her liking."

The woman's eyes flashed.

Apollonius continued: "You know, that by the

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ruling of the King, the rich estates of Elkiah are not to be sequestered as other property of the rebels. His son, Glaucon, having become a Greek, is recognized as the heir. A handsome fellow he is, with a thimbleful of brains; conceited, a prey to clever men, an easier victim of a clever woman—such a woman as has charmed an old soldier like me, caring as you know but little for the sex. You need but smile at Glaucon to addle his wits."

"Are your wits addled?" queried the woman contemptuously.

"Perhaps they have been, but I am in fair way to recover, as my scheme will prove. Should you marry this Glaucon, by Greek law it is true you would not inherit his estates; but no law prevents the fool from giving to you whatever you ask as the price of your favor; and you come high at times, as my thin belt can attest. But, my dear, you must appear to him as of princely rank, for the fellow has been flattered to believe himself courted by the very household of the King. I think I can make my letters sufficiently ennoble you, if your beauty does not evidence your divinity. Will not this sound well? Ahem! 'The Princess Helena, cousin to Apollonius!' Ah, you blush at the title. Glaucon will pay me well for persuading your Olympian wings to fold themselves on his dungheap. It is a scheme worthy the Jew himself, is it not? This little finger of yours will pick the lock of Glaucon's treasure-house."

The woman laughed outright as she cried:

"Shall I go to Jerusalem and act the prude? That is an art I have never practised. I surely had never won your love, my venerable Apollo, if I had posed as the chaste Artemis."

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"Perhaps not," replied the General, with a shrug of his shoulders, "but you have acted the chaste goddess perfectly in the eyes of others. That I will say; for I have had less than a score of opportunities for jealousy during as many moons. And I will swear to this Glaucon that I caught you in my arms as you once escaped the Grotto of Pan at Ephesus."

"Grotto of Pan? Another remembrance of your nursery; and with a moral, I doubt not, as good as one of Æsop. Let me hear the story, but leave off the lesson," replied she, lolling languidly upon the couch.

"Why," said Apollonius, "at Ephesus, when a woman's virtue is not transparent, they bring her to Pan's Grotto for testing. If the god sees no offense in her, then the doors open to heavenly music, and she escapes. Looking one day for something in the shape of womanhood that was immaculate, I lingered by the entrance, and you came bouncing out. Glaucon is up in our Greek legends, and will understand me, even if you did not."

"But if the woman could not pass inspection?" his companion asked nonchalantly.

"Well, in such an unusual case for the town of Ephesus, where Artemis has her temple, the pipes in Pan's cave screech out a wail for the damned, and the tainted woman drops through the rock floor into the river Styx. I will swear that I did not fish you out of the river Styx."

"Paugh!" sneered the woman. "It is time that you sold me out to another after that speech."

The tears shot into her eyes, but they were quickly dried by her hot rage; and as quickly again the livid fury gave place to a forced smile.

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"I warn you, my lord, that I myself will be the judge of my new purchaser, as I was of you."

This woman was well aware that anger did not become her type of countenance; it changed her beauty into hideousness. Whatever age-marks were latent in her face, smoothed by practised smiles, or masked by cosmetics, were brought out by ill temper —as sunburn develops freckles. She was as self-conscious when gazed at by others as when she was alone before her mirror, and as ready with her arts. She, therefore, instantly suppressed the rising displeasure.

Indeed, the displeasure would itself have died as Apollonius further disclosed his schemes; for any fondness she may have felt for the present owner of her affections was less than her innate cupidity, and less than that passion for intrigue and adventure which she had developed by much practice on many fields. In her, deceitfulness reached the rank which in men is called diplomacy. Though now at home in the tent of the Syrian commander, she was not unwilling to enlarge the sphere of her conquest in any direction. Perhaps her eagerness for the spoil of such a house as that of Glaucon was as laudable, certainly as natural, as Apollonius' own ambition to fame himself as the conqueror of Palestine.

The conversation of the General and the woman was interrupted by a lad, whose basket of fruit, deftly balanced on his head, had gained him admission to the camp; for while strict guard was kept against the intrusion of peasant men and women, the children were allowed freedom to sell their delicacies for the coins, though often they received only the cuffs, of the soldiers.

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The boy was stretched at full length upon the ground, counting the bits of money he had taken, and sorting the figs, dates, and grapes which were left in his basket. His head was covered with a mass of unkempt black hair, his body with a single garment, which might have been an inverted corn sack, tied with a string at the waist, while his head protruded through a hole in the bottom. His legs and feet were bare except for the dirt which hosed them, and striped with scratches made by bramble bushes.

So engrossed was the boy in his business calculations that he did not seem aware of his undue proximity to the General's tent, until a sentinel prodded him in the calf of the leg with his spear-point, and bade him "Begone!"

The General, looking up at the outcry, recalled the lad and bought of his fruit, tossing some of it into the lap of his companion.

"Faugh! The Jew's filth soils them," cried she, as the clusters were laid upon the rug.

"Let them be well cleansed then," said the General; "but in this country we must be less particular. The Jews believe that Adam, their first father, was made out of the ground, and surely the race seems fond of its original stock. But in one respect the Jews are cleaner than most people; vermin cannot abide their vile blood; it poisons even the fleas."

"The lad is finely formed," said the woman, eyeing him as a connoisseur. "His ankles are trim enough for a girl's, and his feet are not flattened and ill-shapen as those of most peasants are. And what a face! Ganymedes was not fairer. Look out, my

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lad, that the eagle does not fly away with you and make you cup-bearer to the gods."

"Why not make him your own Ganymedes, my divinity?" cried the General. "You have no Hebe of your own begetting to be jealous of him. What say you, my lad, would you like to be dressed in spangles and wait at the hand of the fairest of Astartes? And perhaps, being only a child, you might drink at her lips, since my goddess has lost her liking for an old soldier's kisses."

With a look of stupid inquiry the boy replied in the Samaritan patois, "An as for a bunch; three bunches for two ases; all for an obolo. Give me drachma and I bring you so much"—extending his arms as if to enclose a bushel.

The Greeks burst into laughter.

"Your learned wit is wasted on a Samaritan, as I am afraid mine would be on that Jerusalem Jew," said the mistress.

"It will not be wasted there. Glaucon speaks Greek well, as do all the better sort in the city. Besides, his head is just now as full as a pedlar's pack of all the scraps of our philosophy, poetry, and art that he can hear. He is specially interested in our Greek goddesses, and in making his hair curl. With his head in your lap you can arrange his locks and give him a lesson in the worship of Aphrodite at the same time. Glaucon will be as good a pupil of Helena as Pericles was of Aspasia."

The fruit-seller, impervious to their wit at his expense, gathered up the remnant of his wares, and started away; but quickly turning, he threw himself down upon his belly in the shadow of the tent, and resumed counting his coins, tallying each one

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with a jerk of his heels, as those dirty but graceful appendages waved over his back.

"The boy's legs talk as freely as the arms and face of Pharetes, the pantomimist. He would make an actor, if trained," observed Apollonius.

"Or a dancer," replied the woman. "Let us see if he has learned to wiggle his calves rhythmically."

She sang a rollicking run of notes, accompanied with snapping her fingers and waving her arms, which tempted even Apollonius to give a few steps in his jingling armor. The boy only stared and grinned.

"Pshaw!" said the General, "the religion of these people is so dull that it rusts even their sinews. A Greek child would have danced on his hands and head at such singing. But, my dear, you should start to-morrow for Jerusalem. I will strike the miserable spawn of that priest Mattathias—Apollo, my namesake, being willing—within three days. Some ten thousand of us, each as valiant as Alexander himself, are only waiting to conquer these sand-hills in lieu of a larger world. We will drive the Jews into their holes and drown them in their own blood, and then move to the city. I fear that Menalaos, the High Priest, is scraping the bottom of every strong-box the Jews left, and if we do not hasten there will not be an obolo for us to buy grapes with."

His companion had become curiously interested in the lad.

"Do the boys and girls dress alike in this country?" she asked. "That child has the hips and shoulders of a woman."

The boy had evidently completed his bookkeeping,

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and hastily swallowing some of his wares, moved away. He sauntered awhile in the direction of the town, trying to keep two figs at a time in the air or to catch one in his mouth; then suddenly turned southward toward the eastern slope of Mount Gerizim, and, depositing his basket under a clump of bushes, ran southward as fast as his legs could carry him.

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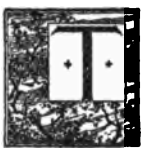
XV

THE BATTLE OF THE WADY



HE gray light of the following morning, breaking between the cliffs of Moab, revealed two figures not far from the Fort of the Rocks.

One was the stalwart form of Judas, his red hair glowing like a sunrise on a mountain pinnacle as compared with the tiny body of his companion, the lame Mephibosheth. The boy's strength was utterly exhausted, so that he could scarcely stand with the aid of his crutch; but his tongue, as usual, was "like a strong man rejoicing to run a race."

"Up on my shoulder, Meph!" said Judas. "You can better whisper in my ear what I judge it were not well for even the trees to hear. She was unharmed? And you met her in the Wady? That is a good seven hours from here, Meph. And you have trudged all night to bring me tidings? The Lord bless you!"

"Amen!" responded Meph. "And General Apollonius moves at once upon us. He will attack us tomorrow or next day. Deborah bade me say that he would surely come by the Wady. They must move up the dry water-bed if they would reach us so soon, for it will take thrice the hours to march over the hills; and she says that one man on the cliff above is worth a score hemmed in by the walls of the great chasm they must pass through."

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"God be praised! And is this all?" asked Judas.

"Except," added Meph, "that a rich convoy has already started from Shechem for Jerusalem by the direct road. In it are many merchants and women of rank."

"We want neither their pelf nor their women," said Judas. "Let them go their way, if they only keep out of ours. But this Apollonius I would have. He is the biggest hawk of them all. Oh, Meph! Meph! if we could only get his claws tangled in the Wady as you get the birds fastened in your nets!"

"I generally have to pull the string myself," said the boy. "You must pull just then and just so, but you get them."

Judas laughed and assured Meph that he would make a strategist if not a champion some day; and with gigantic strides he went over the hills.

Within an hour the Fort of the Rocks was deserted by all save the women, the aged, the sick, and children. In single bands the armed men moved northward, following the depression between the hills, filing like ants close to the clumps of rock so that no eye less sharp than an eagle's would have detected a moving army. As night fell, the Jews, who had been scattered during the daylight, gathered in among the rocks bordering the great Wady. In the darkness they felt their way each to such couch as he might find between the boulders. Soon all was silent, except for the coming and going of Judas and his brethren, giving encouragement or command.

At the same time the army of Apollonius was approaching, a league to the west. A squadron of

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horsemen led the van. These followed the roadway, whose white line was extinguished by the clouds of dust raised by thousands of hoofs. Lance-point and helmet gleamed dimly through the darkness answering the stars, as when heavenly bodies are reflected in rippling water. The command to move in silence did not prevent the clicking of weapons and the low rumble of horses' feet on the beaten road.

Foot soldiers, armed with pikes, bows, and swords, followed the horsemen. Then came camels and asses, laden with provisions and heavier weapons. To the rear struggled hundreds of camp followers; merchants to purchase the spoil; and those of baser sort to revel in the expected rapine. The usual swarm of women were there to make their Circean camp wherever the troops should halt.

It was past midnight when the van of the Greeks reached the opening of the Wady. The soldiers needed rest after their rapid march. Each company scattered to right or left, maintaining only relative order. Then silence fell upon the host. Ten thousand men were scarcely distinguishable from the rocks and bushes amid which they slept. The sharp challenge of a sentinel, the accidental clash of a weapon against a stone, mingled with the hoot of an owl or the bark of some jackal as he found his usual path of marauding blocked by the strange forms of men.

Yet other eyes than those of night-prowling birds and beasts penetrated the darkness. Judas and his brethren had taken oversight of the Greek host almost as comprehensive as was that of Apollonius and his staff.

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"I fear," said Judas to a comrade, "lest something untoward has happened the maiden; for this is the spot, and the stars mark the hour. God forbid that we have erred in sending her upon this unwomanly venture!"

"Yet," said Jonathan, "the information she has sent us is worth the sacrifice of a life."

"But not such a life, my brother. If she has been ensnared, I know not how to rejoice in any victory so dearly bought. Meph says she was at the very tent of Apollonius."

"You think overmuch of the daughter of Elkiah," replied Jonathan. "Besides, she would have her own way."

"Aye, and has it. List!"

The three whistling notes of a quail floated from a long distance, and were scarcely answered by the same signal when a woman stood beside them.

"God be praised!" and the two Maccabees each raised in turn her hand to his lips.

"But why this attire, Deborah? We looked for a Greek helmet at least," said Judas, touching her long flowing robe, which even the night showed to be of a gaudy color.

"The Greek women have the freedom of their camps," replied Deborah. "No greater dangers than insulting words have threatened me there, and words do not harm if the soul does not hear them."

"Still, for every such word a Greek life shall pay before another night comes," said Jonathan.

"Not in my revenge, brave men," replied Deborah. "We must not think of such things. What shall we care for insults when our cause is so shamed? But to my account. Apollonius rides with the middle

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division. The squadron of Syrian horse under Syron leads. Philip has sent a detachment from Jerusalem to join in the fray. The whole army moves into the valley at daybreak. God grant it may be to them the 'valley of the shadow of death.' But yet, how can I wish such things? Sometimes my woman's heart cries out against the cruelty of our most righteous war. But I am woman no longer. My heart has bled so much that my nature has turned to blood. Have you any order for me?"

"None, but that you rest. Do not stay near the battle, for though we pray for victory we are but a handful against a multitude. Our armor is little more than our courage; theirs is brass and iron."

"It matters not," said Deborah. "Did you hear my Caleb's dream? It was of a little hole in the sandy beach which drank up the sea."

"The Lord grant that this Wady be the hole," responded Judas. "If He forsake us not, few of the Greeks will come out at the other end. But to your rest, my daughter! You will need great strength of body and soul to comfort those in the Fort of the Rocks, who will mourn for many of us to-morrow. God watch between us!"

Deborah went a little way in the direction of the Fort of the Rocks. Jonathan accompanied her until she insisted upon lying down to rest in a secure spot, feeling too fatigued to resume her journey before to-morrow.

But no sooner had Jonathan's form disappeared through the night than she rose.

"I cannot stay away from the battle," she said to herself. "Many of these, my brothers, will fall. My place is among them. But this blood, this blood!

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God, must it be? Yet I, a woman, have helped prepare this slaughter."

She fell upon her knees. "Lord, spare Thy people. If blood must flow let it be of those only who have destroyed Thy altars, and blasphemed Thy Holy Name. Spare Judas and Jonathan, and—all these Thy people! Avenge Thou our cause! As the sun drinks the water from the pools, so may Thy vengeance drink the blood of the enemy, and Thy land be purged!"

She rose and walked rapidly, not toward the Fort of the Rocks, but in the direction of the Greeks.

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XVI

THE BATTLEFIELD OF A HEART

EBORAH joined a group of Greek women on the edge of the camps. These were venting their rage upon an officer in command of a contingent sent from Jerusalem.

"The Captain forbids us to come among his tents; Astarte curse him! Are his men better than other men, or better than we?"

"They say he was born in Athens; as if Athens were better than Antioch!" said one.

"The statue of Athena, the prude, in the Parthenon, is so big that it crowds out all other gods and goddesses; and so this upstart Captain would crowd us out. And are we not goddesses? My Adonis, the one with a brass pot for a skull, called me one."

"Yes, they call us heavenly, and help us to Hades."

"Captain Dion would make Aphrodite herself wear long skirts," said another.

"Dion!" The word rang sharp as a thunder-crash through Deborah's soul. A glare as of the lightning's bolt seemed to illumine her. In it she saw herself again a woman. Dion! Was she leading this man to slaughter? But why not? He, too, was the enemy of her land, of her religion, of her God. Had she not vowed death to Greeks of every name? Did her oath spare even Dion?

Yet Dion had saved her. And that, too, in spite of his soldierly duty to his cause.

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Deborah staggered back into the darkness. Her strength until now had been that of a man; but it was the strength which her soul, with its tremendous resoluteness, had imparted to nerve and muscle. Now that her soul was shaken, it sent its quiver through her physical frame, and she was weak as a child. She sank upon the ground.

Then one by one came memory's pictures of the terrors she had experienced in Jerusalem. What had sustained her during those awful days? Her pride as the daughter of the house of Elkiah? The necessity of guarding her blind brother Caleb? Her faith? All these, doubtless; yet she confessed to herself that but for the kind words of the Greek Dion she might have given way. Not his proffered love. No! No! That alone would have made her hate him; but he had been good to her. And if—if God had used the Greek's kindness, even his love, to sustain her, to give her strength for her holy devotion, should she despise this Greek? Should she lead him into this ambuscade? If he should fall on the morrow would she not be his murderess? She recoiled from herself as from some polluted thing.

Then, as a wave receding into the sea comes back, her feeling was quickly reversed. Had she not taken delight in imagining herself another Jael, who could drive the nail through the temple of a foeman of her people, though he were sleeping in her own tent. She tried to say, "Even Dion to his death!" but the sentence would not frame itself in her purpose. Her brain seemed to stagnate. She could not think. She prayed, "Lord, I am but as a mould; fill me with such purpose as Thou wilt!"

At length she said to herself, "I will seek out

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Judas, and beg him to spare the advance of the Greek hosts, for there Dion will be, since his camp is here foremost."

Scarcely was this project formed when she abandoned it. The contingent from Jerusalem to which Dion belonged was as numerous as all Judas' band, and, if not destroyed in the first surprise of the attack, might turn the tide of battle. Besides, what reason could she give Judas for this request? Confess her attachment to a Greek? If womanly shame did not forbid such an acknowledgment to another man, it surely would cost her the confidence of the Jews. Never again would they believe in the patriotism or honesty of one whose brother was a traitor, and whose lover—for such they would regard Dion—was in the hostile camp.

Following her first impulses Deborah had risen from the ground and walked slowly toward the place where she knew Judas could be reached by her signals. But she quickly turned back.

"Might I not warn Dion? Not, of course, his fellow-officers. But, if I did, would not his sense of duty lead him to divulge the plot?" She prayed again for light, but no light came. The gloom deepened about her. Two spirits were tearing her soul asunder in their strife for possession. She thought of her people; of her father dashed to death by Greek hands beside the altar; then of the brave band of patriots who, unless they triumphed bloodily at the very dawn, must themselves be slaughtered before the nightfall. She felt her personality dissolving into a flame of zeal for her land and her people's God. She cried out with uplifted arms: "O God, I am no longer a woman. I am Thine;

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Thy Avenging Spirit! Use me as Thou dost use the lightning's bolt, the flood, the plague, that I may bring destruction to all this host!"

Then, even as she stood with outstretched arms in this awful imprecation, there came the vision of Dion, so noble, though a Greek, with a man's heart greater than all his racial prejudice; the friend who had risked life and repute for her father's safety, though it proved unavailing; the rescuer of blind Caleb; her own friend—who loved her, she could not doubt it—whose thoughts even now, as he was moving to his death, were possibly of her.

"O, God!" she exclaimed. "Take away my life. Let me die rather than make this decision."

She waited, longing that her heart might stop beating through the violence of its own contentions. But it beat on. She drew a dagger, and pressed its point gently against her bosom, as she murmured:

"Oh, if it were but right that I should lay down my life, since God will not take it!"

The crackling of dried leaves caught Deborah's attention. A sentinel gave challenge.

Deborah instantly responded with the watchword of the Greek camp, "The sword of Apollonius," which she knew had been given for the night.

"Another woman, by Jove! One would think he had fallen upon the Grove of Daphne, or the streets of the Piræus, rather than a war camp," said one walking with the sentry.

"Come, get out of this! To the rear with you, or we will make you march in front of the first battle."

"I am not within the lines," replied Deborah. "The lines run from the twisted rock to the cypress yonder. So we were told."

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"Are those the lines?" asked the officer. "Then let her stay. We ourselves have lost our bearing, but daylight is coming up yonder in the East, and we shall need no longer any lines here, for we move at dawn."

Deborah could not mistake that voice, nor the form that the dim light outlined. She thought that she was silent, enacting a tragedy back of her rigidly compressed lips; yet some word or outcry must have escaped her, for the officer turned quickly.

"Woman, did you speak?"

Now she was indeed silent, and moveless as the great rock against which she leaned. The man came nearer and tried to scan her features.

"Woman, I have heard your voice before. Have you followed from Jerusalem?"

A moment elapsed before she replied, but that moment was like one of those in which we dream, and live hours and days. She realized that there had now been forced upon her a quick decision of the question which the past hour of agonizing debate with herself had not begun to solve. She had time in that waiting moment to pray for light. She gathered up many scenes of those terrible days in the city, of her flight from Dion's help, of her vow, of her life as a spy. To these she added the imagined scenes of the coming day, the slaughter of Greeks, perhaps the annihilation of the Jewish band, and extinction of Israel's hopes. She saw all these things, and central of them all she saw the form now before her falling beneath some arrow shot from the covert of the rocks overhanging the valley he was about to enter. And then she saw herself as the accomplisher of it all.

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"And this, this," she said to herself, "is to be a woman's return for a man's love!"

Deborah had often prayed that God would destroy her sense of personality, that she might be but an unfeeling agent of His will, as are the lightning and tempest; but He had not done so. Her human nature asserted itself over her faith; her individuality refused to lose itself in her nationality, or shall we say that her womanhood was stronger than both? This man and herself were for the instant as essential factors in her problem as were the Greek and Jewish armies. But she saw no clearer the solution of that problem; only that it must be solved, right or wrong, and at once. So she replied to her questioner:

"Yes, I came from Jerusalem."

The officer peered closely into her face.

"You are not Greek nor Syrian."

"God be praised, I am not. I am a daughter of Jerusalem, an outcast from my father's house, as you would make all the women and children of Israel to be."

"Deborah! Daughter of Elkiah! Do I dream? Of all the damnable things that war has brought this is the most fiendish. You, Deborah, in a soldier's camp! Good gods! Tell me you are not the daughter of Elkiah, but some black soul from Erebus which has found her dead body and entered it."

"Dion, I did not die, but it is true that another spirit has entered mine."

"Better wert thou dead than live such a life as this," cried he. "Why did you fly without my help? I had arranged for your safety. I would have given my life for yours—but—but now——"

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He grasped her hands, then threw them from him as something that defiled him. "There is no god of Jew or Greek, or this could not have been. Tell me, Deborah, that what I see is not true. That you—that you are not here."

He covered his face with his hands as if to banish the vision of the reality.

"Dion, what you see is true; but what you think is false—yes, false and mean as the gods you worship. An outcast I am, as all my people are; but not an outcast from honour; not from my father's faith; not from the favour of my father's God. Your soldiers have destroyed our homes; where can we live but in the fields? How can we subsist except as the beasts and birds do, by picking up the crumbs which the army of Antiochus drops along its path of slaughter?"

She laid her hands upon her gaudy garments as if to tear them from her.

A bugle sounded. It was quickly answered from far and near. A rustle as of a sudden storm among the rocks and bushes told that the host was waking. Then followed the hum of voices, cut with the sharp words of command, the click of arms, and clashing of utensils, the neighing of horses and outcries of grooms and masters.

Dion started a step as if to obey the call.

"Stay, Dion!" she cried, losing for the instant her self-possession as she realized the fate which hung above her friend.

The Greek turned, and said in quick words: "My command awaits me, Deborah. Tell me how I may save you."

She let him put his hand upon her. As she felt

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his touch she saw this much of her problem solved—he should not return to his command if a woman's will or a woman's wiles could prevent it. The love he offered her she would use not for herself, but for his own sake. Surely if it were right to deceive an enemy for his destruction, it were doubly right to deceive a friend in order to save him.

She replied, "My friend, my father's friend, you can save me from that which I dread worse than my own death."

"How? Who threatens you? Let me but hear it, and my sword will follow him through Jewish or Greek camp, or through hell itself."

"Let us draw a little more aside," said Deborah. "The light is so clear now that it shows us."

Dion slowly followed her, pausing again and again to look toward his camp.

A second bugle denoted that the host was to begin its march.

"You must go back to your duty," said she. "Go, I must save myself as I can. The bugle calls you."

"A more sacred duty calls me here. Deborah, tell me, what threatens you?"

She gently drew him to a seat beside her upon a shelving rock which was overcapped by a juniper bush. Did she mean the tenderness her face expressed, so near to his? She felt that her look was like that of a serpent enchanting a bird. She despised herself and would fain have risen and fled away from the spot. But as she noted the man's features, expressing so well the nobility of character she knew he possessed, and realized also the unselfishness of his devotion to her, she felt that she

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was not altogether practising deceit; that her web, though spun by her brain, was from substance drawn from her heart.

"My dear Dion," she said, "the greatest terror that possesses me is that you think me what my presence here might suggest. Save me first of all from falling in your respect. Believe me, I am still as worthy of your care as when you saw me, a mere child, in Jerusalem—though these few months have made me a woman, I fear with a wicked heart."

"I do believe you, Deborah," cried he, grasping both her hands. "Now that the light shows you, I see the same pure soul I once loved, and never for an instant have ceased to love. But, my child, you have suffered. Pain has cut deep lines. This must cease. If there is anything in my position, my estate, any influence with those in power, any strength in my arm or sharpness in my sword, let me use it. Only tell me."

The trumpet call was repeated. Dion rose, and stood for a while looking in the direction whence it had come.

"I can overtake them," he said, hesitating.

"But how explain your absence? Will not some harm come from your failing to appear with your command? You should go."

Yet her hands were hard holding his, and her face wore an intensity of desire which he, not knowing its full meaning, thought to be only the return of his love.

"I cannot go," said he. "I will not go, my love, until you have told me how I can save you. By all the gods I swear it."

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"Swear not at all," said Deborah, placing her fingers upon his lips, only to receive the kiss they tempted.

Dion's arm stole about the form of his companion. She did not resist it. Why not? Only because thus she was detaining him. Let him interpret it otherwise; it was for his life, and when he was saved they would part forever.

A distant din caught the ear. A wild scream of a bugle was answered by the blast of scores of trumpets and the shrieks of a multitude from the direction of the great Wady.

"An attack!" cried Dion, leaping to his feet.

"Then you must be gone," said Deborah, but still clinging to him as she pointed. "But see, the Jews are thronging there. They have lined the hills. An ambuscade for the Greeks! God be with His people! Stay, Dion, it is useless to seek your command. Your soldiers are in the Wady, and Judas—the sword of the Lord and of Judas is between them and us!"

Dion's trained eye took in at once the military situation.

Yet under the true soldier's impulse, he would have hastened with single sword to his post of duty, could he have seen any way thither. The hills lining the Wady were now black with the Jews; and small bands were hastening from every direction. He could not rejoin his soldiers if he would.

Deborah readily drew him back to their covert. Now and again he would start forth, but as quickly return, seeing no safe exit. Deborah herself became changed in look and manner. Her lips opened as if giving command to the distant soldiers, yet her

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hand on Dion's arm held him captive by the spell of its touch.

"List! The cry of the sons of Mattathias—Mi-camo-ca-ba! 'who is like unto thee among the Gods!' Judas is conquering. See! See! Our people are over the hilltops. They are rushing down into the Wady. God be praised! The sword of the Lord and of Judas!"

She seemed to forget the presence of her companion, yet at the slightest movement on his part her hand stayed him.

"I will hasten to the eastward. Surely our troops will cut their way out there upon the open road," cried Dion.

"Nay, but see! Jonathan and the men from Hebron are there."

"Then I can follow into the ravine and die with my brave soldiers."

"That way is also closed," said Deborah, "for Simon and the tribesmen from the north are pressing in after the Greeks. Look!"

"How knew you this?" cried Dion, as his trained eye saw that the woman was correct. "Are you a spirit of battle? Do you hold the armies of Antiochus as you have held me? Are you witch, or are you woman?"

"I know not," she replied, "I only know that Dion dies not to-day with the rest."

Then the Greek broke away from his captor. It was but for a moment, for all around were Jews, who sprang up as if from the ground.

"Back, back, or you are slain! These peasants never miss with the arrow or sling. Back!"

She drew him to the covert.

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"For myself I care not, but you."

"For my sake then, O Dion, do not leave me. They will kill me. Save me, Dion! Back! They will see your Greek armor, and the arrows will not leave a branch on the tree if you are detected. Back!"

She had scarcely spoken when a missile clanged against the rock at her side. Deborah sprang from the covert, and stood exposed in the open. Dion heard the call of a Jew to his comrades:

"It is only a woman; forward, men!"

The group of patriots hurried by.

Deborah scanned the field far and wide. Seeing that the Jews had all entered the ravine, she turned to her companion:

"Dion, go quickly! Once Dion was called a traitor to his people because he saved the daughter of Elkiah; to-day Elkiah's child had almost betrayed her people that she might save the life of the noblest of Greeks. Hasten away."

His arms would have retained her, but swift as a frightened fawn she ran, and, breathless in his futile pursuit, the Greek watched her agile form until it disappeared among the throngs which marked the edge of the battle. Then he sought to rejoin his forces. But it was only to be caught in a crowd of fugitives who had escaped from the Wady, and, helmetless, were making their way to the west.

The setting sun that day was not so red as the blood-stained rocks in the Wady. Thousands of corpses lay amid the broken spear-shafts and empty helmets which lined the dry bed of the brook, waiting until the next winter's storms should flood its banks and wash away the signs of one of the grand-

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est victories of few over many that history has ever recorded.

The sublimest heroism of that heroic day was displayed by Judas himself. Heading a band of choice spirits, he leaped from rock to rock down the side of the narrow valley, as a wild beast descends upon its prey. He made straight for the spot where helmets were brightest and the banners most enriched with blazonry, denoting the body-guard of Apollonius. His voice, like a lion, roaring the war-cry 'Mi-camo-ca-ba,' scarcely revealed his presence before his sword was crossing that of the famous General.

The gigantic stature of Judas, together with his tremendous strength and fury, well matched any superior skill of fence the Greek might have had. Their swords intertwined like two writhing serpents, neither daring to loosen its grip of the other. But steadily the Jew forced Apollonius to give ground until he was driven back against a rock which prevented the free use of his arm. Then the swords disentangled, and that of Judas entered the throat of his antagonist.

The conflict was over. Judas gathered his scattered bands. Laden with spoil—provisions, arms, and boxes filled with coins—they emerged from the Wady.

Upon a knoll stood the five brethren; about them the warriors, wearied with their work, and sickened with their deep draughts of blood. Judas knelt, and the little host fell prostrate upon the ground in silent prayer. Then, as they rose, a woman's voice raised the old song of Miriam by the Red Sea, and the multitude joined as in the synagogue; but with what new meaning in their faith!

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"I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously. Thy right hand hath dashed in pieces the enemy."

When the shouts and psalms had died away Judas lifted the sword which he himself had wrested from the death-clutch of Apollonius. It was a slender weapon; its handle of fretted gold, its blue steel blade etched with representations of the labors of Herakles.

"Listen, my brave men! This sword belongs to the daughter of Elkiah. Her prowess and her prophecy have won it."

None but he and she knew his meaning, for she had told him of the scene in Apollonius' house in Jerusalem.

Deborah looked upon the blade. She took it into her hand a moment. One near enough might have heard:

"It is the same. I thank thee, O Lord, that a more fitting hand than mine has done this deed."

She then bound the sword of Apollonius upon the thigh of Judas.

"So the Lord gird thee with strength!" she said.

As, according to Jewish tradition, David wore the sword of the fallen Goliath throu h all his glorious wars, so Judas carried the swo d of Apollonius, until five years later it was buri l in the grave of the founder of the Maccabæan ynasty of Jewish patriots.

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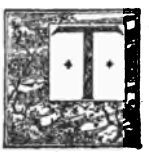
XVII

A FAIR WASHERWOMAN



THE victory of the Jews at the Wady winged the fame of Judas far and wide. Among his own people the chosen war-cry "Mi-camo-ca-ba" gave place to the contracted word "Ma-ca-ba" or "Maccabee," the Hammer, a title significant of the swift and crushing blows with which he smote the enemy.

Even the tribesmen about the borders of the Holy Land, the Horites in the caves of Petra, and the dwellers in the flint castles of the desert, wondered if a new deliverer had risen in Israel. In black tents on the plains and in strongholds among the cliffs were told again and again the old stories of the Jewish judges; while the Arab sheikhs of the Jordan valley deliberated if it were not wise to cast in their lot with a people who, even if not favored directly of heaven, might by such human valor as Judas and his men had displayed, beat back the deluge of Greek power which threatened to submerge their own as well as Israel's possessions.

Among the Jews the enthusiasm was like a fire amid brambles, so rapidly did it spread. Simon, the Wise, was persistent in his counsel for patience, and for wide and cautious preparation.

"Remember, my brethren," said he, "that we are not boiling a pot, but are to consume the very Cedars of Lebanon—for such is this gigantic power

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of the north which menaces us. The fight in the Wady was but the beginning of battles. Antiochus has many armies. He will gather fresh hordes from the nations which own his sway. We have only wounded this wild beast of Antioch. He will turn again upon us with more ravening strength."

The news of the overwhelming defeat of Apollonius brought consternation to the Greeks, and especially to the renegades in Jerusalem. Every one who repeated the tidings added what he or she feared, until the numbers of the Jewish patriots were swollen to vast multitudes in the popular mind. The more sagacious assumed that the Jews must be in alliance with the great nations which were contesting the dominion of Antiochus beyond the deserts in the Euphrates valley. Some had it that the Egyptian Ptolemy had resumed war against Syria; and even Rome was rumored to have thrown her sword into the scale; for it was incredible that an untrained peasant, with so small a force of herdsmen as the Jews were reputed to have had, could outwit one of Apollonius' astuteness, and with a single blow shatter his phalanges.

Imagination, made sensitive by fright, pictured the valleys beyond the hills filled with strange armies. Squads of Greek horsemen would scurry rapidly across open fields, then halt for long observation on the hilltops before venturing another dash. Popular superstition transformed Judas himself into a demi-god, or one of the ancient worthies of Israel, Samson or Gideon, returned to earth.

"They say he is as big as Pelops, and carries a whole tree-trunk for his mace," said a Greek soldier, looking stealthily behind him, and watching an

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olive clump whose stiff branches shook in the evening breeze.

The gates of Jerusalem were now closed by day as well as by night. Watchers patrolled without the walls, so that not a goat approached without being scrutinized, "lest," said a Greek wag, "his horns should prove to be the head-piece of another Alexander, the great Macedonian, who wore such horns for his crest."

The only inhabitants permitted free access and egress at the city gates were the women who went daily to the brook Kedron, bearing loads of clothing which they hastily washed in the running water, with faces made white as the linen by the stories their fright invented. At any moment this terrible Judas might leap upon them out of the hills or the heavens.

A group of these women were one morning at the Siloam pool. Among them was one of well-bronzed face, and short black hair which sprayed out beneath the close folding of her soiled kerchief. This woman was accompanied by a child who sat upon the brink of the brook, that his feet might feel the brush of cool water as it flowed by. She untied a hamper of garments which she had carried upon her head, and, tying up her skirts above her knees, waded into the stream. Like the others, she dipped the pieces altogether into the water, pounded them one by one with a short wooden club, then wrung each garment into a tight little bundle, and flung it upon the bank.

Suddenly a cry arose among the women. A cloud of dust appeared upon the old road leading from Bethany. All gathered their laundered work, and

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hastily climbed the steep ascent to the southern gate of the city.

"Is it Judas?" asked the boy. "Can we get in before he catches us?"

"If we hurry," replied the woman. "Come."

"I wish it were Judas," said another, pausing in the shadow of the tower above the gate. "Since these Greek fashions have come there is nothing but wash, wash. The new Princess has enough white linen to cover the peak of Hermon as the snows do, and enough coloured garments to make her like a sunset."

"Is she beautiful?" asked the strange washerwoman.

"So the men say, but——"

"But? Go on."

"Why, you yourself, girl, would be fairer than the Princess if you had one of her jewels in your hair. And as for her figure, no one sees her except as she lies like a painted statue in the palanquin. She may have a turtle's back and duck's legs, for all she arches her neck like a swan."

The clamour of the washerwomen sufficed without further watchword with the sentry at the gate, who opened to them the "needle's eye" or small door. Once within the city they could not be induced to venture out again for the day, though assured that the imagined Judas was only a Greek courier riding from the direction of Jericho, who brought tidings that no enemy was to be seen for a distance of twenty stadia in any direction.

Passing the cellar-like tunnel beneath the city wall the laundresses scattered, each in her own way, through the streets.

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The woman we have described, with her load upon her head like a huge turban, and with the lad clinging to her skirts, went up the Cheesemakers' Street to the Street of David. She paused an instant by the little altar which stood by the street door of the house of Glaucon, whether in detestation of this sacrilege of a home devoted to piety or to offer a pinch of incense, an observer could not have told. She rapped sharply at the gate. The bar was instantly dropped from within. A short, stout man, whose long temple locks were well whitened with years, stood in the half opening.

"What do you want?" said he, as he saw the unexpected visitors.

Before the woman could make response, the child had uttered a cry, "It's Ephraim! It's Ephraim!"

The man started back, and stared at the lad.

"As the Lord liveth!" he exclaimed, and caught the boy to his arms. "Surely Sheol has opened its gates. But where, woman, have you found him?"

"It's Deborah, too!" cried the lad. "Are you blind, Ephraim, that you cannot see Deborah?"

The woman passed through the door, and dropped the bundle from her head upon the pavement of the court.

Old Ephraim gazed stupidly at her. Then he clutched the boy closely, as if it were necessary to re-enforce vision by feeling the living child, ere he could credit his senses.

"God be praised! It is she. My master's children, both!"

Overcome as by an apparition, the old servant staggered for a moment, then with a spasmodic burst of strength grasped the door, swung it shut,

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dropped the heavy cross-bar between the lintels, and stood with his whole weight against it.

"Ephraim, I am not pursued; no one will harm me here," said Deborah.

"No one dare touch you here," replied he, with a fierce look at the closed portal, as if in challenge of men and demons without. "No one will touch you here, but—but you shall not go away again."

Ephraim glanced up at the sky, which dropped its light into the open square court around which the house was built, as if he would close that way of exit also, apparently imagining that it was only by some such aerial flight that Deborah had formerly disappeared.

"Is Benjamin here?" inquired Deborah.

"Benjamin! God bless your lips for speaking that name once more. It's many a day since we have heard anything but 'Glaucon,' 'Glaucon,' as the son of Elkiah has gone in and out of his father's house. Aye, he smote me in the face for repeating the name we called him when, on the eighth day of his life, we circumcised him according to the Law—the name recorded in the Temple when, about as big as Caleb, he was enrolled as a Son of the Law, and the fringes put upon his coat. But whence came you, my daughter? And why this dress of the serving women? And your hands are hard, and your feet torn, and your beautiful hair is cut off, and years have come into your face. When Huldah shall see you, she will cry tears that are bitter as well as gladsome, for your old nurse has sat in the house like 'Rachel, mourning for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they were not.' Poor hands!" He raised them to his lips.

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"Your kiss, good Ephraim, has gone far to heal them," replied Deborah, with moistened eyes.

"And in this?" touching her garment, as if it were some unworthy thing that defiled an altar. "In this? The daughter of my master, with robes in her chamber fit for Sheba's queen, clad like a water carrier?"

"Huldah's fingers and mine will soon remedy these things," replied the girl.

"That they shall"; and Ephraim's voice rang through the house:

"Huldah! Huldah!"

The old woman appeared upon the scene, with eyes flashing contemptuously from beneath the white mantle which covered her head.

"What now, Ephraim? Are you grown so old that you dare not push the beggars from the door? I'll show you that a woman's strength does not ooze out through her wrinkles."

She made at the intruders, but her prowess vanished as quickly as the strength goes from a broken bow.

"My mistress! My darlings!"

She threw herself prone upon the pavement of the court, kissed the feet of Deborah, and fondled them.

"Poor bruised things!"

She could not rise, for Caleb had thrown himself into the lap of the woman, who, when the first paroxysm of her excitement was gone, sat crooning over the child, forgetful of the weary months during which her arms had longed for him as if he had been her own.

"You were always a mother to us, Huldah. The Lord bless your dear good heart."

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"And to think that you were away from me, and wanting me!" cried the nurse, hugging closer the blind child.

"The Lord has been with us," replied Deborah. "Some day I will tell you all."

"I would have known all that happened to my master's daughter," said Ephraim, "if I had known whither you had gone, for with you I had gone also. Here have I stayed, not for love of Benjamin, but because I did not know where to go to seek you."

"The Lord reward you, Ephraim! And now let me go to my chamber."

"That alone has been untouched," said Huldah. "You see that all else has been changed."

Ephraim led the way across the court, Huldah following, carrying Caleb.

In the centre of the court played the little fountain; but it no longer sent up its simple sheaf of spray. The water now trickled from the hands of marble Cupids, and fell upon the nude form of Aphrodite, and filled a shell-shaped basin at her feet. At the corners of the court stood exquisite sculptures, evidencing the new taste of the master of the house.

As Deborah stepped upon the platform, or open square room which served as the entrance hall to the living apartments, she was confronted by a middle-aged man, in white chiton and embroidered girdle, with close-curled locks and flat face. His lofty but otherwise expressionless look, and the stiffness of the motion by which he simulated dignity, indicated that he was the chief of several Greek servants whom Glaucon had installed.

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"Not in here, woman," said he, putting his hand upon Deborah. "You Jewish dog," he added, addressing Ephraim, "have you forgotten your business, to bring your street herd into the house? I'll teach you."

He raised his hand to strike him, but Deborah's arm intercepted the blow.

"Hold, I am mistress here," she said.

Her shabby garb could not disguise her supreme grace of mien, nor did her weather-bronzed skin hide the beauty of her face or lessen the tone of refinement in her voice. The man stared in motionless amazement as she raised the curtain and passed within, bidding Huldah to follow.

Leaving Ephraim to tell the story of her identity, she entered the first lower chamber, the reception-room of the mansion. She noted the strange and foreign things which had taken the place of the familiar furniture, much of which had been the heirloom of many generations; then she passed to her own chamber. Here, as Huldah pointed out, everything was as she had left it the day of her flight.

"Now, good mother, let us be alone," said she, with a fond embrace of the old nurse.

"Here is the key of the chest," said Huldah, after much fumbling in her bosom, and nearly denuding herself in the search. "The Greek slaves that Benjamin has hired steal everything that their fingers touch. But they have not come in here. Even Benjamin swore to kill them if they did, though they have opened all his closets, except the hidden ones between the walls."

When they were alone, and Caleb, tired of seeing every familiar thing with those eyes in his fingers,

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had dropped to sleep upon the couch, Deborah knelt by the side of it—the bed which had been hers in childhood. She would pray. But quick memories wrought a veil that shut out the present communion. She recollected her mother that day when they carried her out to be buried, and when, as a parting gift, she left them little Caleb. She thought of the happy years when Benjamin had taken her upon his big boyish shoulders, and played with her on the roof-top, and down by the brook Kedron where she had been to-day. She had been wont to dream of Benjamin as a prince among the people, and wondered if the Messiah, when He should come, would be handsomer or braver or kinder than her brother. Then she recalled the strange sickness that had fallen upon Caleb; the days of pain which her little mother-hands alone could exorcise from his hot temples and writhing form; and how, when the sickness passed, his eyes grew larger, as if seeing things far away, but saw not anything that others looked upon. She sat again at her father's feet, and learned from his lips the sacred precepts of the Law and the thrilling stories of her nation's heroes, and the wonders of Jehovah's arm made bare for Israel's deliverance. God had been to her in those childhood days a Presence of which she seemed conscious—the clouds His robes of glory, and every whispering breeze His assurance of love and care.

But now—she tried to pray, but her prayer was only like the cry of a child in fright. Her soul threw out its arms blindly grasping at she knew not what—yet called that unknown "God's Will."

How weak she was! And yet how strong!

She realized that she was but as a leaf in the

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stream which the current carries along, but which the current cannot sink. True, she could not resist the terrible tide of circumstances into which her lot was cast, but neither could these circumstances destroy her. She stood with clenched hands, motionless, looking at nothing.

Her lips moved, and this they said: "I cannot even pray. I was Elkiah's daughter, but now I am not even a woman; I am a spirit, vengeful, hating, deceiving, or I could not do this thing. Yet surely, I am Elkiah's daughter. This is my chamber. And this, and this, and this is mine. O, my father, forgive me! And yet thy sainted spirit called me to come home again. O, Lord God of my father, help me to honour his name, and to save his house!"

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XVIII

HIGH PRIEST! HIGH DEVIL!

EBORAH threw off her coarse garment, and before the mirror of polished brass—in which many generations of women had been made conscious of the beauty for which their family was famous—she arranged her hair as decorously as its brief length permitted, supplementing its lost beauty with a band of pearls which she discovered in the great carved wooden chest. Her arms were now as sun-stained as those of a Bedouin maiden from the tribes beyond Jordan, and made goodly contrast with the silver bracelets which once scarcely rivalled the whiteness of her skin. She donned an embroidered bodice and outer robe of white linen, and put on the sandals with the golden-threaded strings binding the ankles, such as she had often worn.

"Once more I am the daughter of Elkiah."

A momentary flush of pride answered the reflection in the mirror.

She pushed it from her, and sat with folded hands upon the couch.

"A hypocrite! What better am I than that brazen mistress of Apollonius? Oh, God, must I do this? A spy in the house of my father? Lord, lead me. Save me from wrong-doing. Yet is it not Thy will?"

"What is it, sister?" asked Caleb, who was now awakened by Deborah's soliloquy. He stretched

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out his hands to her, but shrank back as he felt the strange texture of her robe.

"We are home again, my dear. Come, you must wear your pretty clothes."

While dressing Caleb neither of them spoke, for their attention was drawn to loud voices which sounded from the adjacent chamber.

"The Lord be with thee, Glaucon!"

"And with thee, Menelaos!"

"Ha! ha! you haven't forgotten your old-time piety."

"If I had, the presence of the High Priest would revive the memory. I take it that your office has more agreeable functions, now that the King will not allow the priests to smell so much of blood and offal as formerly. A journey to Antioch, a chariot in the processions, and a symposium in the King's new banqueting-hall—though the wine has too much mastic in it—must be preferable to playing chief butcher at the Temple. Is it not so, my lord?"

"Hush, Glaucon! Your words have too much truth in them to be agreeable," replied Menelaos. "But, by Jove!—it is convenient to have an oath one can use without blasphemy—by Jove! I would rather be here hobnobbing with an old comrade than tripping up on my official skirts in Antioch."

The Priest threw himself upon the wide divan, while an attendant arranged behind him a pile of cushions.

"Wine, Ajax!" cried Glaucon. "I am sorry we must take it no cooler than the cellar, for these rebels have let no snow be brought from Hermon since they sent Apollonius across the Styx."

"The gods forbid that that ravening beast Judas

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cut off other supplies," replied the Priest. "Not a partridge nor a fish has been sold at the market for a fortnight. The Princess will have double cause for grief over the death of her cousin, the General, if she stays in Jerusalem. So goodly a bit of flesh should be fed better. But a fine convoy is coming down from Antioch."

"There is no doubt about her kinship to the General?" asked Glaucon.

"Oh, none whatever. Apollonius' letter to me implied as much. They say she has great riches. The tribute of a whole city in Anatolia, or Syria, or the devil may guess where, follows her; for Apollonius was as bold in robbing his enemies as he was in killing them; and he loved the woman so well that he would have let her melt off his legs had they been golden. The Princess says that a thousand shekels belonging to her were in Apollonius' military chest and fell into the hands of the damned Maccabaean."

"That is the worst thing I have heard about Judas' victory," laughed Glaucon. "But the Princess has plenty of credit, I take it, even if she can't transport through the air the gold plates on the roofs of her many palaces."

"Gold plates or thatch, she's rich enough," rejoined the Priest. "And, by Aphrodite's ankle! what a woman she is! Glaucon, if it were not that I have already at least one wife, I would cut your throat for jealousy, for Helena evidently takes to you. She has an eye for manly beauty. And you, Glaucon, have a face which, but for the twist in your nose that the alipta has not yet mollified enough to straighten out, would be the face of a god. You are an Adonis in figure. If I had your

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shoulders and calves I would forswear priest's robes. What a couple you and the Princess would make!"

The click of a brass mirror was heard as Glaucon replied, "'By Aphrodite's ankle!' A good oath that. I will remember it. 'By Aphrodite's ankle!' Ha! ha! A good saying! a good saying! The Princess is a beauty, I swear! Her lips are always red."

"Not from over-use either, I take it," interjected his coacher.

"And her skin so fair!"

"Never saw anything fairer outside the shop of Demos, the cosmetic seller in Antioch," replied Menelaos. "And, by Jove, you are a fool, Glaucon, if you don't get her. Listen! With all of her distant possessions I happen to know that the loss of Apollonius' box left her in need of ready money; ready money, you understand, for she has plenty that isn't ready. I proposed to advance her a few shekels, but my wife Lydia, the chaste—please tell her I called her that—objects on the ground that as High Priest I should not lend money. But really, my wife is as jealous of Helena as a hen is of a duck. A gift from your strong-box, Glaucon, would not be a bad investment. 'Cast thy bread upon the waters,' says Solomon, 'and thou shalt find it after many days.' I commend the precept to your piety, son of Elkiah the provident."

"Perhaps I could spare something," said Glaucon, musingly.

"I do not doubt it," replied the Priest, "else you have not used well the office I have secured for you. And how goes farming the taxes?"

"Thanks to your favouring me at Antioch, my good

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Menelaos, I am in fair prospect, though we have not much gold in Jerusalem. The soldiers have gleaned everything that glittered. But I am getting hold of some estates, the heirs to which have either been killed or have joined the rebels, so that their titles revert to the King. For these he gives me fair commission.

"But there is one matter that puzzles me, Menelaos. Do you remember the house of Shattuck? It is now a score and a half years since that family disappeared from the city. Hosea ben Shattuck was a merchant in Sidon wares, his shop where the Street of David bends toward the Tyropean, his house the great one by the Tower of David. Report has it that he journeyed to Alexandria—took ship at Gaza—but he never returned. As Shattuck was unmarried there seems to be no one interested in chronicling his whereabouts. The property is now one of the largest on the tax list. I could secure the title for the value of a pedlar's pack. Among my father's accounts I found the evidence of Shattuck's indebtedness to the house of Elkiah in the sum of fivescore shekels, some little matter of business between them, such as my father would never press against a neighbor. Though he did not ask the repayment of it, he made record, as was his habit in all money matters. He would not exact usury from a fellow Jew, but with the usury such as our new customs allow it would amount to thrice as much as the original debt."

"Claim the property, the whole of it, or you are a fool for a Jew, much more for a Greek," said Menelaos eagerly.

"But if any heir should return?" queried Glaucon.

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"But you said there was no heir."

True, but one doesn't always know about such matters."

"Well, if there be, what then? On what ground could he make claim for restitution? All titles of absentees now rest with the King. The property, according to the last edict, will be confiscated. I can fix it at Antioch that your indebtedness will be recognized. One hundred? Make it a thousand. I myself will file claim, and vouch for it that your credit in the matter is worth the entire estate of Shattuck."

"You have great power with the King, my dear Menelaos."

"Power with the King? Why, I bought him when I bought my High Priesthood. You know that Jason, my brother, sent me to Antioch with six hundred talents to bribe the royal pleasure for his appointment to be High Priest. I appropriated the six hundred, added three hundred more to it, and bought the office for myself; and so outplayed the young trickster at his own game. Beside that, you recollect that it was I who gave Jerusalem to the King."

"How was that? I am not so well versed in state secrets as I should be," replied Glaucon.

"Why, when Jason, the Priest, came suddenly back from Egypt, hearing the false report that Antiochus had died, he threw me into the dungeon at Akra. To rescue me, and regain my conduct of affairs, the King sent his army and took the city. So without me the King would not have had it. No man, my dear friend, has had more to do with making the King's fortune than I. And he cannot dispense with

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me yet. But I must have some return for what I do for him—and for you. For my part in your business, Glaucon, I shall have what portion of the gain?"

"A third," said Glaucon, hesitating, and watching the face of his comrade.

"Make it half."

"The old greed, Menelaos. The same that always claimed the fattest bird we snared together when we were boys."

"Greed! A proper taunt from the lips of the son of Elkiah, indeed. Who secured for you your office of tax-farmer? And how many other estates have you tapped like a wine-skin to fill your own jars, of which you have told me nothing? Simon ben Shem wants to be tax-farmer in your stead. He has done as much for me as you have, and will pay me a higher rate for protection at Antioch."

"Forgive me, Menelaos," cried Glaucon, quivering before the Priest's gaze like a bird bewitched by the eyes of a snake. "I always bantered you for taking the largest game; but in the end, as you know, always let you have it. Let it be play between us."

"Good!" replied Menelaos. "And what news of the Greek who loved you so well that he split your skull with the discus?"

"I fear," said Glaucon, "that we will get no news from Dion. He was in command of a company sent from our city garrison, and not a man has returned. Poor Dion! Next to yourself, Menelaos, I never had a truer friend. Thorough Greek that he was, he seemed to have a love for our people. He knew the legends of Moses as well as he knew the stories of

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Homer, and I think he loved them better. The Lord rest his soul if we see him no more!"

"Amen!" said the Priest. "May Pluto give him a high place at his banquets, for Dion was a good roysterer. He was as faithful to your father as Æneas was to his. And he could not have searched the camps for your brother and sister more thoroughly had he been her lover. But farewell! The blessing of Jehovah, or Jove, or both, be with you, Glaucon; and the smile of the Princess. Farewell!"

"Jehovah, Jove, damn him," ejaculated Glaucon, as he threw himself upon the divan the High Priest had left. "It is bad enough for one like me to have turned against one's people, one's own house; but for a High Priest to become a heathen—High Devil! Faugh! Wine, Ajax! My purple himation! The large mirror! Some oil, here! Do the locks curl at the neck? Call the litter. I'll away to the Princess, and cast my bread—Ha! ha!"

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XIX

THE RENEGADE

TAY, Benjamin!" cried Deborah, thrusting aside the curtains. She stood a moment at the opening, scarcely recognizing her brother in the heavy-lipped and maudlin face, the artificial curls, and the costume of a Greek exquisite.

Benjamin stared an instant in stupid curiosity, then took a step or two in fright.

"It is I! And Caleb!" cried Deborah, seizing his hands and putting them about herself, and pressing her face to his.

"God has been good to us, and brought us home, Benjamin," shouted Caleb, eager for his embrace.

"It is true. Yes, yes, it must be so," said Glaucon, at length coming to his senses, with a flash of his old affectionate nature, like a waning ember, lighting up his face with a suggestion of its former beauty.

He drew his sister and brother both to the couch, and sat between them, staring from one to the other.

"And you? You were not killed? What has happened? Where were you taken?"

A few words sufficed to tell him all that she cared to have him know—that she had fled for her life; had fallen among friends; had not dared to return to Jerusalem before this, fearing some repetition of the insults such as Apollonius had once offered her. But that now the Governor was gone, she had come

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again to be under the care of her natural and legal guardian, "and, God willing," she said, "that the house of Elkiah may again be graced by the presence of woman and child."

Glaucon's manner evidenced much restraint. He was not at ease in expressing even the kindliness and affection he felt, for he had felt so little of these emotions that he had no words in readiness to convey them. There was the difference between his brotherly welcome and that given by the old servants that there is between the shaduff, toilsomely lifting its bucket of water at a time, and a fountain pouring out its welcome to the upcoming flowers. Very soon the sentimental part of the interview was past, and Glaucon proceeded to the practical.

"If, my sister, you are to abide at home, since the King is extremely jealous of the loyalty of the old Jewish families, it would be well to adopt a name less clannish than your present one."

"Call me what you will, brother. I will know myself only by the name my mother gave me. I can, however, quickly interpret any other word into that."

Glaucon's mind was opaque to the fine sarcasm of his sister; he proceeded:

"Berenice is a beautiful name among the Greeks. You know the story of Queen Berenice? No? Then I will tell it to you as I have heard the Princess Helena tell it. I think the Princess has hair like Berenice's, soft and silky as glistening light. You must come to know the Princess."

"But the story of Berenice?" interjected Deborah, wearily.

"It is a fair story as she told it to me," replied he.

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"Berenice was the wife of King Ptolemy of Egypt; he who was called Euergetes, which means Benefactor. Berenice was the loveliest of women. Her eyes gleamed with starlight, and her hair flowed about her shoulders like the mingling rays of the sun and moon.

"Once, when the King was warring in Syrian lands, his queen made a vow to the gods that, if they would return her lord safely to her arms, she would cut off her hair, and consecrate it in a temple in Cyprus. The gods were tempted by this gift, and gave Ptolemy wondrous victories and a speedy return. Berenice fulfilled her vow. But such was the beauty of her locks that they dazzled the eyes of the beholders who came into the temple. Whereupon the gods hung Berenice's hair in the sky, and there it is still. You may see it any night. It is gathered into seven nodes which seem to be stars. All of our Greek astrologers know of the constellation of Berenice's hair. The charming poet, Callimachus, made a hymn in praise of this new beauty of the heavens. I will sing it to you."

"No, no," said Deborah, "the story is fine enough as you have told it. Do not sing it. But my black threads do not suggest the starry brightness of Berenice's locks. The name would better fit some fair-haired woman. But call me what you will, my brother. And how shall we know the child? Caleb means 'God's dog.' What will that be in Greek?"

"The Greeks have that spirit in them that one would not be the dog of even Diana, the goddess of the chase. Theodorus is a pretty name, and means, 'gift of the gods.'"

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"Let him be called, then, Theodorus," said Deborah, with an acquiescing smile.

"But Berenice must dress more gayly than Deborah did," added her brother. "This bodice looks like one that came out of Egypt with Miriam, and for aught I know this linen was made by one of Pharaoh's weavers, and was picked up on the shores of the Red Sea."

"Our mother wore these, and she was counted the most beautiful woman in Jewry," replied Deborah. "Besides, I have scores of changes made of stuffs such as are rarely seen in these days. As for jewels, caps of coin, ear-rings, necklaces, anklets and armlets, we have enough to deck out a score of maidens, and laces which the princesses of Egypt have worn, and robes of the most expensive Tyrian dye. The daughter of Elkiah need not fear to appear among the gentlewomen, come they from Antioch, or even the new capital of Rome."

"True enough as far as value goes," replied Glaucon. "But these are not in the fashion. When you see the Princess Helena you will envy her the new shapes of dresses and jewelry. She is fairer than you. The sun has tarnished your complexion, but she can teach you how to bleach it."

"I have no doubt," interjected Deborah.

"But," continued Glaucon, "when our Berenice is clad as well as the Princess she need not be ashamed before even that marvellous woman."

"Thanks, my brother."

"I would that Dion could see you in the costume I shall have sent you from Antioch."

"Does Dion live?" asked Deborah.

"Dion, I fear, is dead. A curse on those treacher-

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ous sons of Mattathias. Sons of Belial! But," he rattled on, "it will be well to make known to the people of the better sort in Jerusalem the return of the mistress of the house of Glaucon. I will see to it that the wife of Menelaos, the High Priest, and the wife of General Seron—who is to command the new army of the King—and the Princess make their welcome to you. Berenice, sister of Glaucon: why may she not some day be Queen of Jerusalem? Already, my sister, with the wealth our father left me, and much more that I have gained through my own shrewdness—for I am the best business head in the land—I am the richest man in the city; and with the revenues I can control in my office as tax assessor, I can soon buy what I will from the King."

"I fear, my dear Benjamin—my dear Glaucon," said the new Berenice, gently touching her brother's cheeks, "that the glitter of your riches has affected your head as the sun's rays sometimes do. As for the new garments, I shall be glad of anything that makes me fairer in your eyes; but I still bethink me that the apparel of Jewish women is more elegant than that of the Greeks. Indeed, the better costumes of Athens are borrowed from those of Syria. Of late years, since the death of our mother, and since the sorrows of the land crushed our father, the great oaken chests have been unopened. In them are garments laid away in cassia dust, for which the costumers of Antioch would give more shekels than they ask to array the chief of Antiochus' concubines. To-morrow, if it please you, let Berenice, as the mistress of the house of Glaucon, receive the ladies whom you desire."

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"As you will have it," said he, kissing the hand of his sister in the latest manner of such etiquette imported from the capital. "Such spirit as yours, Deb—Berenice, is worthy of her who is to outshine them all."

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XX

A FEMALE SYMPOSIUM

A DOUBLE awning shielded the house-top of Glaucon from the glare of the late afternoon sun, whose rays gathered intensity by being reflected from a hundred white domes which, like inverted wasps' nests, rose from the lower roofs of the city. Toward the sky the canopy was of coarse white flaxen material; beneath it was lined with silk, blue and white. Several movable divans, one of ivory, one of beaten brass, the others of sycamore wood, were set next the western parapet. These were covered with cloths of various colors upon which were wrought conventional figures in threads of silver and gold. The couches were so arranged that they faced a low table of ebony, heavily inlaid with mother of pearl. On this were the remnants of a repast, consisting of cakes, confections, fruits, and wines mixed with water. On the couches reclined four women, richly clad according to the fashion of the day.

Cynthia, the wife of General Seron, wore an outer robe of blue silk. This was closely drawn about her person, so that the full proportions of bust and limb were revealed by the very device for their concealment. It was the boast of Seron that his spouse was the best-formed woman among the wives of the generals. Her costume showed that she was conscious of this pride of her husband, and inclined

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to show that it was fully warranted. Her attitude as she reclined was that of an Amazon, and would have been sufficient to warn away any assailant, even if he were not terrified at the tiny spear of silver which she held in her fingers, and which had fastened to her coiffure the hat, a flat disc of ornamented straw, that now lay in her lap.

The Princess Helena was radiant in the relics of nature's bountiful endowment, judiciously repaired by the newest arts of feminine fashion. If wax and rouge, pencil and pomade were her allies, they were in slyest ambush within unsuspected wrinkles, and gave out not so much as a stray freckle for a sign of the delusion. Her hair was thrown back from her forehead and temples, and banded with a triple fillet which gathered it up at the crown, whence it sprayed down in a shower of gold upon her alabaster neck. Her outer robe of white wool had been thrown back, and lay upon the couch, in seemingly careless, but really artistic, contrast with her purple chiton. This under-garment was gathered at the left shoulder within a gemmed clasp, loosely girded beneath the breasts, and open below, displaying her limb from foot to thigh.

Lydia, the wife of Menelaos, the High Priest, had reason for being more modestly covered, yet blazed in her green himation spangled with gold.

Deborah, the hostess, rivalled these beauties in the contrast of her purely oriental costume. Her black hair was covered with what seemed a solid helmet of gold, so many were the coins which made her cap. About her throat and falling low upon her bosom was a great necklace of rarest gems, which

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flashed in all the hues most prized by lapidaries, from the starry white of diamonds to the deepest blush of rubies. The pearls pendant from her ears touched her shoulders, and glowed like rivulets of light. Her inner garment was elaborately wrought with needlework, and partly covered with a yellow outer robe. Altogether the Jewess was a splendid vision of wealth and beauty, of which it is sufficient to say that it had already passed the favourable inspection of so great a connoisseur as her brother Glaucon.

In their conversation the women seem to have exhausted all themes of a purely human range—the faults of generals, from strategy to bow legs; the King's stud of horses and his harem; the statuary of Phidias and the flat-nosed gods of the Phœnicians; the epic of Hesiod, and the latest songs from the streets of Antioch. Berenice had been induced to tell her adventures, of which she gave as authentic an account as perhaps her visitors gave of their romantic haps and doings on less savory fields. The glory of the western sky, the palette of colors ready to be painted together into the sunset, the grand old Temple mount of the Jews, over which echoed now and then the bugle-calls of a hostile race—these, together with the quickening influence of their generous repast, now lifted their discourse to higher planes.

"All religions are one," said Lydia, the wife of the High Priest. "The Jews should be the first to recognize this. Since we say that there is one only living and true God, it surely follows that Jove, and the Phœnicians' Baal, and Ormuzd of the Persians, and Jehovah of Israel are the same."

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"How," interposed the Princess, "how can Jehovah be Jove, the universal god, since Jehovah never shows himself, nor is He worshipped, except in this little land, and by the children of the one family of Abraham? He is rather like one of our household gods, such as we teach the children to do homage to, but ourselves use for ornaments."

"But he has not even an image," laughed Cynthia, the wife of Seron. "I have learned in Egypt that the gods always abide near their images."

"That is if they are pretty images, beautifully carved and painted. For the gods seem to be as vain as we women who love our mirrors," said Helena.

"But," rejoined Cynthia, "the Jews' god is such a serious being; always telling his people to be good, and scolding them for their sins. That story of Mount Sinai, with its dreary rocks and sands, and the lightnings with their nest among the peaks, and caves like great mouths roaring out thunder; oh, it must be a doleful place! I prefer Mount Olympus, with its fair women and warriors for divinities."

"And the worship of the Jews' God must be very tedious," added the Princess. "On the Sabbath, no laughing, no playing."

"Our God takes his rest on that day, like an old grandfather, and does not want his children to disturb his nap," sneered Lydia. "But my good Menelaos is changing such customs. On Sabbath next we have the great games. Charicles from Sparta races with a Nubian chariot runner and an Arab sheikh, for a stake of ten shekels which the High Priest has offered. It will be a sight; three statues, one in marble, one in ebony, and one in porphyry, all come to life."

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"The fault of the Jewish religion is that it makes too little of this world," said the Princess. "It has no divine patron for the arts; no Melpomene to inspire the song, no Terpsichore to stir the dance, no Ares for war, and no Aphrodite to teach us how to love. I don't believe that our fair hostess, who lies so solemnly there, has yet learned how to commune with Aphrodite. I will pray that our happy goddess touch her lips and make them itch for kisses, before the crow's feet make their marks at her eyelids, as they soon will do if she insists on such mannish escapades as she has been having. What shafts from Cupid's quiver those black eyes could shoot, my fair Berenice! I shall warn all my lovers to beware of you ere you learn your power."

"I fear that just now we need to consult the war god," said Berenice. "Think you that Ares had gone wooing the day of the battle in the Wady? Or did it please his godship to lend his sword to the Maccabæan rebels rather than to Apollonius?"

"Quick! the Princess is fainting. A little wine, my dear. The death of her kinsman went to her heart. That was a cruel thing for Berenice to say," exclaimed Lydia, bending over her friend.

"I am better now," responded Helena in a moment. "My dear kinsman, Apollonius, taught me to bear misfortune. It was his motto, 'Forget the dead, except to emulate their virtues.' As he braved death, I must brave my bereavement. I believe with Plato—do you not? that the soul is immortal. Then Apollonius lives. Perhaps I shall see him again." She hid her face in the cushions.

"Apollonius' death will be quickly avenged," cried Cynthia. "Already my husband, Seron, has been

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called to lead the new army, and at one blow he will utterly extirpate those Jewish beasts. All save Jerusalem, from the Great Sea to Jordan, is to be swept with sword. The King has put into my Seron's hand all the forces in Syria; and following them is a great multitude of colonists from the north, who are to settle the lands."

"Where is Seron now?" asked Berenice.

"This letter came to me but three hours since," replied Cynthia. "Let me read:

"'The armies from the capital, joined by many phalanges recalled from service beyond the Lebanons, are with me. We shall rendezvous on the plain of Sharon, and thence advance westward to the hills where the outlaw Judas has his camp. Have no fears, my love, I am not an Apollonius. We shall this time avoid all ravines, and march only in the open. The number of soldiers with me needs neither secrecy nor haste. The peltastai and cavalry alone could quickly destroy all armed bands of Jews. We shall consume the land, walled cities, open villages, and scattered houses, as an army of grasshoppers consumes the harvests. Not a partridge shall escape our pots, nor a Jew's head our spear-points. Greet Glaucon with this bit of news—his friend Dion is with us, having alone of all his company escaped the massacre at the Wady. The day after the full moon we begin the ascent of the hill country. Keep thy dear heart in patience until the war god rests his head in the lap of love, for I shall be a day with you in Jerusalem before we press to the East and South.'"

"The moon will be full three nights hence, will it not?" asked Berenice nonchalantly.

"Nay, in two," said Lydia, consulting her tablet. "It is one of the duties of the High Priest's wife to wait upon the Night Queen, as does the Priestess of Tanit. The second night the moon goddess will be in full array. I must haste to tell the news of

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Seron's coming to my Menelaos, that we may have a religious celebration of the triumph."

"Then must I say farewell so soon to my new friends?" said Berenice, rising. "Make my salutation to your good husbands, our friend Menelaos and General Seron. And to what princely gallant will the fair Helena convey my greeting?"

"I must keep your greeting all for myself, my dear Berenice, until time has allayed my grief for Apollonius' death," replied the Princess. "Unless you bid me send it on your own account to Captain Dion," she added. "Ah, blushes tell tales the lips do not care to utter."

She kissed both the cheeks of Berenice, but did not note that her breath blanched the blushes which Dion's name had started, as frost kills roses.

An hour later Deborah stood beneath the jewelled lantern in her chamber, for it was now dark. In her large mirror she saw reflected a figure far different from that which on the roof had excited the envy of the vainest of her sex. Her cap of coins, her necklace and ear-rings, silken robes and bejewelled sandals, were tossed together in a heap on the floor.

"You can arrange them, Huldah, when I am gone; and lay them back in the chests."

The old nurse was too much blinded by her tears, and her hands were too trembling with excitement to have performed that duty then. She sat on the floor rocking herself, her hands covering her face.

"My darling came back to me with feet hard and torn, and in the clouts of a washerwoman, and now she is going away again like a—like a——"

"Like a woman, a woman of Israel," interjected Deborah, adjusting the brown sheet, the common

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coarse outer garment of a peasant, over her head and around her form.

"Tell me, Huldah, do I not look like you or any other woman? If I do I am handsome enough for the stars to gaze at. Now remember, I am supposed to be sick and confined here in my chamber, and you are to bring me my broth three times every day until I really come back. I will think of your love, Huldah, and that will make me strong; and you will think of me, and that will bring me back safely."

She kissed the cheeks of her "good mother" as she called her, and glided across the court to the entrance of the cellar. Caleb was already there. They descended to the lower story.

"What news for me to-night?" said a familiar voice, accompanied by the click of a crutch on the stone pavement.

"Why, Meph, you must take me along with you for your message this time."

"Whew!" said the boy. "You're not really going yourself, Deborah?"

"Yes; can we reach Judas before morning?"

"If the stars don't get sleepy and go to bed before their time," replied the lad. "It's a good six hours' stretch though."

Deborah embraced Caleb, and disappeared with her guide.

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XXI

BATTLE OF BETHHORON

THE sun had long risen the next day when Deborah came out of a little hut on the brow of Bethhoron Heights, several leagues to the northwest of Jerusalem. It was one of a score of half-burned and half-demolished structures which marked the site of a deserted hamlet.

A group of men, who had been lying among the rocks hard by, rose and silently saluting her walked away; but not without backward glances that betokened both reverence and curiosity.

From her high outlook Deborah's eyes took in the vast plain of Sharon, which lay at her feet. In the far distance the blue sea mingled with the blue of the sky; a wonderful background for the nearer landscape, which seemed like a garden. Yellow grain-laden fields, patches of variegated poppies and lilies, vast sections of green meadow, and groves of fig and orange diminished by distance suggested parterres of flowers; while the white highways from Cœle-Syria and the coast seemed but footpaths. Far to the north the sky was dotted with circling eagles, while the dust clouds beneath suggested the fancy that these birds were flying cinders flung upward by some conflagration.

Deborah put her hand to her brow, and gazed long in that direction. The dust haze began to

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sparkle as with fire-flies. Her trained eyes recognized the far gleam of spear and helm.

"They come," she ejaculated.

She signalled to an armed peasant near her. "You are sure that Judas got the message?"

"I myself delivered it, my lady. Already our little army is on its way northward. By night they will guard every road leading up from the plain; and then, themselves kept out of sight, they will follow southward and strike any detachment of the Greeks that ventures to ascend the hills. But Judas must believe that they will not attempt any ascent until they get as far down as this, for Simon and John are hard by, and examining every slope and runway along the front of Bethhoron."

Later in the day the astute surmise of Judas was demonstrated to have been correct. As Deborah watched, she plainly distinguished the detachments of the Syrian hosts succeed one another in their southerly movement, like billows of grain under a strong breeze. When night fell the plain of Sharon right before her gleamed with camp-fires, as the sea with phosphorescence; while on every side she heard the rustle of the moving bands of her countrymen, together with the subdued voices of command. But not a light glowed on the brow of Bethhoron.

Late in the night Judas came to her.

"My child, you should not be here. It was enough to have sent us word."

"I could not remain in the city," replied Deborah, "for I clearly foresee that to-morrow we shall have a great victory, which the Lord will give us, or else we shall be utterly destroyed."

"But here you are in danger," responded Judas.

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"I beg you to return to the city. If we succeed we shall soon join you there. If we are destroyed the Lord will raise up others to avenge us, for His cause rests with no single army. He is the Lord of Hosts, and will fill our places with better men. You must live to be for them what you have been for us. It is enough that we die."

"Nay, Judas, entreat me not. The daughter of Elkiah will meet the fate of the sons of Mattathias. It is my father's spirit that speaks through my lips. I shall seek no danger, but I must cheer our brave brothers, and staunch their wounds or close their eyes in death. Do not think me rebellious, but to this duty I am surely called by Him who commands us both."

"I dare not command you, Deborah, for you are closer to God than I, and know His will more perfectly. But this thing meets not my judgment. Only do not follow the men over the heights. Yet I think we shall succeed on the morrow. General Seron is making a mistake as clearly as did Apollonius. When his host attempts to pass over Bethhoron it must keep to the highway. With his horsemen and armament he cannot climb the ledges, nor can his footmen march through the tangles of brush and swamp. They must follow the zigzagging of the road, and move in a long and twisting file like a string crumpled in one's hand. His line may be twenty furlongs in length, but it will all be within five furlongs' reach of us. Our men can cross these thickets and stone fields as swallows skim the ground. Behind the rocks and brushwood one of our archers will have a score for his target. Besides, we will have the advantage of fighting from higher

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ground. I have no fear. Our onslaught will be sudden; they have as yet no dream of opposition. One is tempted to make a night attack upon their camp. But it is better to wait; for, if I mistake not, to-morrow they will move up the Heights like a line of captives to the headsman's block. Yonder is the valley of Ajalon, above which the sun stood still until Joshua had gotten the victory. Pray with us, Deborah, that the sun may not set to-morrow until we too have been victorious. If the sun will not lengthen the day for us, we will so crowd it with valorous deeds that we shall make it like many days in one. Farewell! Do not venture beyond the Heights."

Before noon of the following day, the advance of Seron's troops was well up the ascent by the winding road, in exactly the order which Judas had anticipated. For miles the army stretched away, almost to Lydda; the glare of clustered spear-heads showing like the golden spots on a python. In places detachments which were far removed from one another in the marching order were brought close together by the loops of the road, while intervening fields of boulders separated them, so that they were not in helpful proximity.

But no danger was visible to the Greeks. Helmets were thrown off and piled on wagons with the baggage. There were songs in which the men from one province tried to drown the voices of men from other parts of the King's realm with their strange melodies. The only precaution shown was by the very foremost of the army of invaders, who, obeying their General's order of discipline, sent out scouts. These threaded their way slowly between the boul-

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ders near the crest of Bethhoron; leisurely feasting themselves upon the berries which glowed blue and red at their fingers.

One closely watching these scouts and pickets would have noted that when a Greek soldier surmounted the crest he neither returned nor made sign to those following. He simply disappeared, his comrades supposing that he had passed in safety. But an eagle flying over the spot would have paused to hover, with beak parted for the carrion feast that awaited him there; for behind the ledge were masked the deadliest shots among the Jewish bowmen, and those most expert with the short lance, having from boyhood used it in hunting. Men who could elude the sagacity of the fox, and pin the wary beast to the ground with a throw of threescore paces, made quick finish of a Greek armed with a long and heavy sarissa, which was fit only for close prodding.

Behind the van came the staff of Seron, men bemedalled for exploits in many battles. Then followed squadrons of horse, crowding their sweaty flanks, and rubbing the greaves from their riders' legs in the attempt to keep full number abreast on the narrow road. So the python's head reached the Heights of Bethhoron.

Suddenly the crest of the hill burst as with an earthquake. A roar as of thunder articulated the war cry, "Mi-camo-ca-ba!" Every rock scintillated with spear-heads. Arrows clouded the air, and fell in deadly showers upon the unshielded Greeks, leaving scarcely a man or a horse standing on the near roadway. Hundreds of these shafts, as if borne by wings, so far was their flight, dropped amid Seron's

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suite, and the gayest plumes first nodded beneath the deadly challenge.

Under cover of this storm of missiles, and before the enemy could sufficiently recover from consternation to clearly discern the meaning of the attack, the armored Jews dashed over the crest. As when a dam bursts, the living flood poured down the slope, carrying everything before it. Mi-camo-ca-ba! the wild cry from a thousand throats, drowned all shouts of command. But one sound was heard above the din. It was the lion voice of Judas, as with the sword of Apollonius he hewed his way through the half-formed phalanges. The first stretch of road was not cleared of the foe before those on the second bend were hemmed in by the patriot archers, who had gained the covert of rocks on either side, and swept the highway with unerring aim. For the Greeks to advance was impossible; orderly retreat equally vain. Those who stood their ground were huddled together as for quicker slaughter. Those in the rear turned backward in flight. The splendid squadrons, blinded by panic, became like herds of riderless horses, spurred by the sting of arrows. Cavalry dashed back upon the infantry following, carrying these foot soldiers along as a freshet its débris. In less than two hours the army of Seron was in hopeless rout over the white hills and across the green cornfields of the plain of Sharon.

The Maccabæans did not follow in pursuit. To have done so would have revealed to the enemy the fewness of their assailants. Should the Greeks regain their wits and resume the fight, Judas foresaw that his men, away from their coverts of rocks and

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copses and in the open plain, would be readily annihilated by superior numbers. He let the panic do its work.

"It's the angel of the Lord," he said, "though his wings are black with God's curse."

So Judas was content to watch the writhing of the python whose head he had crushed.

Seron and the survivors of his staff displayed their genius by escaping in the opposite direction to the retreat of the mass of the army. They turned off from the highway, and crossed the fields toward the southeast in the direction of Jerusalem, their only covert now. Several of the horses of his suite were abandoned, having broken their legs as they slipped between the rocks; others refused to enter the thickets of underbrush which had already torn their flesh, until they were unmercifully prodded by the spurs of their riders. A handful of officers at length struck a hoof path that with many windings debouched into the highway near the summit of Bethhoron, whence they made their way toward the city.

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XXII

A PRELUDE WITHOUT THE PLAY

HE day had been one of intensest excitement in the city of Jerusalem. From earliest morning the population had poured out of the gates, and gathered on the high ground to the north that they might welcome Seron and his host.

It was remembered that on this spot years ago, according to the stories the rabbis told, Alexander the Great had been received by the people of the city. He, too, had ascended from Sharon by the pass of Bethhoron. Now, in the steps of the mightiest of world-conquerors, as Cynthia proudly noted, was to come the great Seron.

The High Priest, Menelaos, had arranged a ceremony copied as nearly as might be from the legends of Alexander's visit. He himself was dressed in full pontifical robes of purple and gold, as were the ancient priests of Israel, except that the name of Jehovah no longer shone on the gold plate of his turban. The supreme pontiff was followed by scores of men, most of them Greeks, dressed for the occasion as common priests in white robes, which glistened as if the bright morning light were itself a part of the pageant. There were musicians with trumpets and cymbals to beat the very atmosphere into melodious salutation, and clacquers to shout and cheer the oration which Menelaos should pronounce

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as he invoked the blessings of all the gods upon the head of the advancing chieftain.

After this official procession came a double palanquin, bearing the wives of Menelaos and Seron; and upon their persons, if one might judge by the gorgeousness of the display, was much of the movable wealth of their spouses.

The Princess Helena, too, shone radiantly. Her complexion, the triumph of cosmetics, rivalled the white but ruddy skin of the children who ran beside her and gazed at her beauty. Her light hair was star lit with jewels, and wrought into a high coiffure not unlike a miniature sheaf of wheat with a binder of gold. She reclined upon the cushions in graceful lassitude, and nodded her head at each stride of the carriage-bearers with the dignity of one who felt that she had already made her conquest of the world, and would graciously encourage the coming warriors in making theirs.

Yet there was on the face of the Princess a shadow of disappointment as she gave her patronizing recognition to one and another of the élite passing by. She was reserving her graciousness for Glaucon, one of whose ancestral gems shone brilliantly upon her bosom. The announced illness of Berenice left her coquetry this day an open field; for, in spite of her flattery, she had conceived a distrust of the sister of her paramour. There was to her mind a strangely familiar look about Berenice's face, a flitting suggestion of something she had seen and ought to remember, but could not. Helena believed in the transmigration of souls, or sometimes thought she did. Was Berenice's spirit one that had crossed her path in some previous state of existence? She could

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not determine whether the shadowy reminiscences were real or fanciful; nor, if real, whether they were pleasant or otherwise. She said to herself, "This feeling is foolish," but Berenice's presence always awakened the feeling. So she fell back upon a bit of philosophy she had once heard from a noted rhetorician, "There is an instinctive hostility between some souls, and an instinctive love between other souls, with either of which the intelligent judgment has little to do."

But Glaucon did not join the gay throng. Did his sister's illness so concern him? The Princess felt a flash of jealousy mantle her face, and knowing from the frequent lesson learned at her mirror that it did not make her handsome, she toyed with Glaucon's gem until more pleasing thoughts came.

Toward midday the crowd of watchers on the hill noted a cloud of dust rising above the road from Bethhoron. It swirled like that raised by a whirlwind. It came rapidly nearer and larger. At length the cry broke from the crowd:

"The army comes! Seron! Seron!"

Forth moved the multitude. The company of priests led, the white linen garments of the old régime marred by garlands worn in imitation of the revellers at the Bacchanalian rites. Men bore an altar of the war god Ares, and a jar of wine, with a great goblet of gold from which the oblation should be poured. Behind these marched the city guards, in glistening helm and breastplates and greaves, the least among whom seemed to emulate the war god himself with his pompous tread. Then came the palanquins of the noble women, each a gorgeous display of silken colors, suitable to set off

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the glory of the occupants. Behind followed, as they could find way, the multitude, whose gay attire rivalled in its variegation the plumage of an aviary of birds caught among the reeds of the Red Sea shore.

The crowd halted when they clearly detected a group of Greek horsemen spurring hard along the road. Why were they riding so hard? As they came near they were seen to be without helmet or spear or heavy sword; dust-covered and bleeding; on jaded beasts whose flecks of sweaty foam interlaced the tatters of their once gorgeous harness. On they sped in blind flight, trampling their way through the crowd.

"Back! Back to the city!" shouted the officers. "The Maccabæans are close upon us!"

"Stop, my lord! Stop, my lord Seron!" cried Cynthia, as the General was hurrying by.

The sight of his wife revived the remnant of this great man's wits, which the panic had sadly dissipated. Making himself the special attendant of her palanquin, he set an example of celerity by heading the scurrying crowd. He commanded Dion with his handful of soldiers to guard the rear.

That officer quite leisurely performed his duty, lingering alone far behind the multitude, and anon riding back as if seeking again to join the battle. This was not because he was enamored of the fight; but as he was climbing Bethhoron Dion had caught sight of a woman in peasant garb bending over a wounded Jew. He had nearly ridden them down. The woman, seeing the danger, rose and with uplifted hand warned him away. A woman's hand only, but the steed would have refused to leap

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against it had the rider plunged the spurs to their depth. There are some gestures and attitudes that belong to the soul, and express its dominance over all things of flesh and blood. Dion could not catch the woman's face, but that very pose with the uplifted hand had awed him before this. He had seen it at the gateway of the house of Elkiah, and again amid the ruins of the house of Ben Isaac.

But he had no time to connect his thoughts, for at the moment a sling stone struck his helmet, and drove it down upon his neck. When he had adjusted his headpiece his horse had carried him far beyond the spot.

Then he said: "It was only imagination; when one's head rings as mine did with that stone, the thoughts inside are apt to rattle too."

Dion remembered that he had often had visions of that same woman in some form. In all the march down the plain of Sharon he had thought of her as somewhere among those hills. When in the battle he felt the sharp sting of an arrow which grazed his thigh, he found himself asking the question, "Would she care if I fell?" Now, as he looked back toward Bethhoron, he said: "This was only a spectre of my imagination." Yet he would risk his life to see that spectre again. But Dion obeyed his General's orders, and plodded slowly after him. His head dropped upon his breast, and he scarcely noticed a boy with a crutch who struck at his horse's flank and hobbled away.

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XXIII

THE GREED OF GLAUCON

GLAUCON had not gone out with the crowd to welcome General Seron. His curiosity for the pageant and his fascination by the Princess were just then secondary to his cupidity. This native trait in his character had been excited into spasmodic activity by a certain discovery. He had spent the day before searching the mansion of Ben Shattuck, that grand house by the Tower of David. With the avidity of an old-clothes dealer he had ransacked chests of the cast-off wearing apparel of dead generations of Shattucks, now and then perforating with his fingers the moth-eaten linings of pockets and pouches. He had tested drawers for false bottoms, and pried into secret closets between walls which the mortar, cracked by sinking beams, had exposed. He had been rewarded by a handful of forgotten gems, but more by a crumpled bit of papyrus in a leathern wallet which he found in the bosom pocket of the shirt which Ben Shattuck must have discarded the very day of his departure from Jerusalem, the journey from which he never returned. This was a letter and read:

"To Hosea ben Shattuck, greeting:

"The business committed to my care has been, I believe, both faithfully and wisely adjusted. It were better for the trade between Sidon and this port if you resided either here or there.

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There is another reason for your speedy visit, if not abiding sojourn, in Alexandria. The lady to whom I hold that you were legally wedded has given birth to a son. The little lad is sound of limb, of comely face, and, if the midwife's experience pronounce good judgment, the child is of soul as bright as the star that shone the night of his birth.

"I beg that you endeavor to be in Alexandria the eighth day hence, when the child will be circumcised according to our sacred rite.

"I am the faithful servant of the house of Shattuck,

"GIDEON BEN SIRACH."

The discovery that an heir of Shattuck had been born complicated the matter of title to his estate in Jerusalem. Was this child living? If so, he would now be about the thirtieth year of life. Glaucon spent the day in instructing a faithful envoy, and commissioning him to Alexandria to ferret out the facts.

This messenger had scarcely gained the south road leading to Gaza when the crowds of panic-driven citizens burst through the northern and western gates, some going to their houses, but many hastening to the citadel, deeming the city walls too weak to withstand the Maccabæan deluge they imagined to be pouring after them.

The bewilderment of Seron, and his declaration that his defeat was brought about by unearthly agencies, which neither generalship nor numbers could resist, while designed to save his own reputation, added to the consternation of the people. Renegade Jews began to repent of their apostacy. They increased the alarm of the foreigners by the sudden revival of their own faith in the marvels of Jewish history, and their Scriptural accounts of the waves of the Red Sea, and the magic in the hands

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of Aaron and Hur when they upheld the arms of Moses. Frightened credulity saw the afternoon shadows that day grow shorter instead of longer, as they did at the battle of Ajalon in Joshua's time. Some averred that at nightfall the sun, as if to make up for lost time, made a sudden plunge to his setting, splashing the waves of the Great Sea until like billows of blood they mingled with those of fire along the horizon.

The disastrous issue of the battle led Glaucon to seek the secret closets in his own house, to conceal in them his riches of coins and jewels, and certain papers which would be more honored in Antioch than in Jerusalem, if the Maccabæans should enter. One such hiding-place he knew was in the cellar. He had never opened it. From a lad he had avoided dark places. Yet he thought he knew how to distinguish the spot. It was the fourth stone from the corner nearest the steps. He had often heard it spoken of as the "trap." He felt his own pallor as he descended the steps; but a chill that made his flesh sensitively shrivel seized him when he lifted this stone, for a damp air like the breath of ghosts issued from the opening. Summoning all his courage, he thrust his trembling hands down, feeling for alcoves or shelves in the hollow dark space. Suddenly his timid nerves failed him. There was a subterranean sound; a rustling as of winding-sheets; footfalls soft and muffled, such as ghosts might make. He would probably have fainted had not his greed given him strength. Clutching his bags he glided away like a frightened lizard.

A few moments later voices came out of the hole.

"It is strange," said Caleb, "I smelt a light."

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"I, too, thought I saw a gleam," said Deborah. "But, surely, I lowered the stone when I came down the other day. Have you raised it since?"

"I was down but once while you were away," replied the lad, "and I know I closed it, for see! here I pinched my finger in setting the great stone back."

"It was too heavy for you, child. You should not have come down here," replied Deborah.

"But I could not stay in the house, and you out of it, sister; so I went through the quarries and whistled for Meph at the wall, but he didn't come; I played all day in the caverns."

"What a place to play, my child."

"Well, I couldn't see how bad it was, so I didn't care."

Caleb led the way up from the cellar. Huldah, who had waited and listened for signs of her coming, held Deborah in her motherly arms, and dropped upon her face some tears well salted with memories of by-gone years.

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XXIV

LESSONS IN DIPLOMACY

N the excitement of the great disaster no one had inquired for Deborah, except Glaucon, who received from the cautious Huldah evasive replies regarding her illness. The day following the battle her brother insisted upon seeing her, since it might be necessary to make sudden flight in the event of the Maccabæans attacking the city.

Deborah came from her chamber, walking with difficulty. One would have said that she had received a hurt or a wound from a fall. She, however, spoke slightingly of the pain in the sinews which sometimes came to her, an inherited disorder; at least she had heard that her mother was at times similarly attacked; but a few days' rest always cured her. She now listened with surprise to the story that a great battle had taken place, and upbraided Glaucon and Huldah and Ephraim for not telling her of it. She questioned every new-comer with the eagerness of fright. Each fresh outcry in the street seemed to deepen the blanch of her cheeks, so that even Glaucon, though his face was pale and his lips trembled, rebuked her timidity, and swore great heathen oaths, such as befitted so valiant a protector.

"What shall we do if the rebels really take the city?" she asked.

"We will flee to Antioch."

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"But the Jews hold all the country to the north, do they not?"

"If the worst comes we can take ship at Gaza. I have got as much gold as my belt will hold, and our asses are ready to start at daybreak, if the news then warrants our flight. But who comes?"

Through the uproar in the street were heard cries of the name of Dion. The curtains moved, and the young Captain stood at the opening.

Glaucon's welcome was enthusiastic. He embraced his friend, and kissed him upon both cheeks. The Greek did not return the salutation. He seemed dazed, and stared steadily over Glaucon's shoulder. Had he indeed gone daft? After gazing at a sunset one is apt to see golden spots resembling the orb wherever one looks at the sky. Had Deborah wrought a similar illusion on his imagination? He had seen her in his dreams, both waking and sleeping; among the women of the Greek camp at the Wady; and only yesterday in peasant garb amid the dying on Bethhoron—yet she was here in her home! He was beginning to question his own mental condition. His hand came to his head as if to certify that it was still upon his shoulders. Deborah quickly proved that this time at least she was no sprite out of the foam of fancy. With a suppressed cry of surprise and gladness she sprang to meet him. He would have been less than a man if he had not extended both hands to embrace her. To her glorious womanhood was added the frank joyousness of a child. Her face caught the flash of her soul, and was illumined by it.

This was, however, but for the instant. The next moment she drew back. Her face flushed, then be-

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came of marble pallor. Dignity, hauteur, offence, almost scorn were written upon her brow and lips. It was if a bursting rose-bush were suddenly encased in wintry ice.

Deborah realized that the surprise of Dion's coming had thrown her off her guard. Had she not solemnly determined, that night at the Wady, that henceforth they two could have nothing in common? This had been a conviction of her judgment and of her sense of duty. That hour when she had used a woman's wiles to accomplish a higher purpose she had classed among her other practices of deceit as a spy. She had scorned herself for it. Now that her debt for his risking life in her behalf had been fully paid—paid off by her risking her loyalty to her country to save him—she had accustomed herself to think of him only as an enemy; a Greek, either hating the Jews and therefore persecuting them, or else a mere soldier of fortune, indifferent to all right and truth, as unfeeling as the point of his sword. In the one case he was a man whom she, as a Jewess, must treat as a foe; in the other case, he was a man of such character that she, as a woman, must despise him. She had resolved that if ever they did meet—and she prayed God that they might not—it should be with such frigid courtesy on her part that former relations could not be resumed. She had thought, too, that she could readily play this part. Had she not schooled herself to absolute self-control? Who could see through any mask she pleased to wear? Not the shrewdest of the Greek generals in whose tents she had been; not the suspicious eyes of these women in Jerusalem. She had prided herself that, whatever feeling might linger in her heart,

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her personality was buried within her patriot purpose.

Yet just now her impulse on seeing this man had been as uncontrolled as that of a child. What had she done? She said: "I have betrayed myself." Then she asked a deeper question on this line than she had ever asked before: "How could I betray myself? Am I not my own very self? Is there, then, some deeper self with which I am not fully acquainted? And is it true that that deeper, stranger self, having never been consulted, has never consented to the judgment I had formed regarding Dion?"

She began to feel, what the Princess believed, that there is a mysterious sense of kinship between certain souls which asserts itself in spite of conditions, which heeds no warning of judgment, and refuses submission to other passions. If it were not so, why had Dion's sudden coming made her do that which no other surprise could have led her to do—make her forget herself?

But in a moment more she had recovered her self-possession. She bowed Dion to a seat as coldly as any stranger might have done, and bade him tell the story of the battle.

Captain Dion addressed himself solely to Glaucon, for each glance at Deborah seemed to interrupt his memory of events. Once and again he stopped midway a sentence as he looked at her, until Glaucon recalled him by repeating his last words.

At length, fixing his eyes steadily upon her face, he said:

"We were defeated because we had on our side no —prophetess—to inspire us to more than human valor."

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But Deborah was now on her guard. That play on Dion's part belonged to diplomacy, not sentiment, and she rewarded his ruse by not so much as a quivering eyelash or the shadow of a changing hue.

"Do the armies take prophetesses to their battlefields?" she asked.

"The Greeks do not," replied Dion. "Such holy women as we have remain at home and consult the entrails and stars. But it was reported that the Jews were accompanied by some of theirs. I overheard one say, 'The prophetess, the Daughter of Jerusalem, is with us.' "

His eyes searched hers, but could discover no sign that she understood his deeper meaning.

The diplomatic play between Dion and Deborah was like the sword play of two expert fencers whose blades cling together. Glaucon unwittingly relieved the tension by inquiring:

"As a soldier, do you advise my leaving the city, Captain Dion?"

"I as a soldier, or you as a soldier? Which do you mean?" laughed the Captain.

"I am not a soldier," said Glaucon. "My position of influence is too great for me to take such risks."

"If you were a soldier," said Dion, "I would advise you to make your house a castle, and die behind your parapets. But no, I think that one with so many other interests had better take refuge in the citadel or at Antioch. The fact is, our forces have been utterly overthrown. The Jews are in pursuit through the plain. Judas, I think, camped in our camps at Lydda last night. But he will return; and if he strikes us here we have not sufficient soldiers to

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guard the entire walls. We can hold no more than the citadel."

"Then I will gather up all I can, and to-morrow have it removed to the Tower of David," replied the frightened man.

"I commend your discretion," said the soldier, as Glaucon, summoning his steward, left the apartment.

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XXV

A JEWESS TAKES NO ORDERS FROM THE ENEMY

ND you, Captain?" said Deborah, with as much coolness as courtesy when they were alone. "You will pardon my seeming lack of hospitality, for you know that you are ever welcome at the house of Elkiah; but should you not return to your duty? The riot in the street needs a strong control. And are you not under orders from General Seron?"

"The General has forgotten what orders he has given," replied Dion. "Or, if he remembers them, he will have to enforce them with a new army from Sheol, for Seron has fled thither. It was bravely done, but terrible. The General has already taken the only vengeance that remained for his defeat. He has washed out his dishonor in his own blood. We had scarcely entered the citadel when he turned to me and said, 'Dion, this disgrace I shall never live to hear told. Do as I do.' With that he struck his dagger to the heart of his wife, then fell himself upon his sword point. I did not obey his order. I was too cowardly for that."

Dion hesitated before he continued:

"But no, I was not cowardly. Deborah, since what has passed between us, I owe to you the confession of my only reason for not following my leader in his terrible deed. I thought of one very

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dear to me, from whom I seemed to have been separated by long years, so slow did the time creep in her absence—now among a people foreign to me. To this woman I had once bound myself with a vow."

Deborah felt the blood coming to her cheeks.

Dion kept on: "While this woman lives, I must live, unless she bids me die. But if she shall call me coward I will disprove her words by dying at her feet. Does the daughter of Elkiah bid me follow my General? I will obey. Since the turn of affairs at Bethhoron you will no longer need one of hated race to protect you. As your Jehovah is my judge, Deborah, I have lived for naught else since I felt the touch of your hand at the Wady. I await your word."

How much one can live in a moment! The two preceding years lay there in Deborah's memory like a landscape under the lightning. She saw this man in his sacrificial friendship. She thought that she resented his personal affection; but, that being eliminated, he was the noblest of souls: a Greek, yet respecting her nation's faith even by the altar in the Temple where he raised his protest in the endeavor to protect her dying father; defending this house because it was a home; more tender to her Caleb than his own brother had been. She asked herself, "Could even Judas have shown nobler manhood? Would he befriend a household of his enemies whose only claim should be their piteous need?"

With all hauteur gone, she extended her hand and said:

"Forgive me, Captain Dion! I have wronged you. I have been blind! I am blind still!"

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She thought she had looked him frankly in the face, and that she had pronounced these words very calmly; she was unaware that she had blushed, that tears came into her eyes, and that her hand trembled in his.

Dion was more astute. Like an expert soldier he detected the favorable turn affairs had taken at this critical juncture, and sought words to press his advantage. But before he could speak Deborah had lapsed into reserve. Was it her woman's pride that felt somewhat of resentment? or was it the remnant of her former resolution which came as a forlorn hope to her rescue? She said:

"You, sir, should be with your soldiers; and I—I have much to think of."

"But pledge me, Deborah, that you will not go again to the army."

At this she stood erect and haughty, as a captive queen before her captor might have done. She forced severity into her tone:

"I am a Jewess, sir, and must not take orders from the enemy."

"I do not command, I entreat," replied Dion. "By your own God, Deborah, I swear to you that the slaughter of all the King's host is less to me than that harm should come to a hair of your head."

"A very pretty speech," rejoined Deborah, with simulated sarcasm, "but it is scarcely a speech befitting a Greek soldier. Is your faith like a helmet which can be changed at will, that you can swear by a stranger's god?"

"My faith! My faith!" exclaimed Dion. "We Greeks have no such faith as yours. But a single

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faith have I—that all gods are one, or rather, as your heroism has made me feel, that one God is all. The God of Israel is the God of all nations. That you have taught me. I have found my prophetess, if Israel has none."

"It is the true faith," said Deborah, "but how should you know it? Is a girl's belief more to you than all your boasted philosophy?"

"Not a girl's belief, but a woman's life," cried the Greek enthusiastically. "A life filled with the spirit of her God, is most convincing. That has persuaded me. And yet, Deborah, these thoughts are not altogether new to me. From childhood I seem to have had something of this faith. Voices have spoken to me from an unknown world—a world over this, as the sky domes all lands and seas. Our Greek gods are to this God of yours as the bright things about us are to the sun. Though the sun's face be hidden by clouds all things get their brightness from it. And strangely, these voices I speak of seem to be recalling me to something I had once known and forgotten, or to awaken something born in me, but still latent and unintelligible. Your father's clear faith, your own words, your devotion —these have been an interpreter of what I have so vaguely felt. Believe me, Deborah, I commit no sacrilege when I swear my devotion to the God of Israel."

Deborah listened with a delight not concealed by her expression of wonderment.

"Tell me," she said eagerly, "tell me more of yourself, Captain Dion. I pray you be seated. Did not your father have something of this faith? Else who has taught you?"

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"My father I have hardly known," replied Dion. "He was attached to the court of Philip of Macedonia. When I was but seven years old he was sent on an embassage to Rome, and never returned to us. My mother had died four years before. Of her I have but dim remembrance, or perhaps fancied remembrance, prompted by this."

He produced from his breast a small box enclosing a beautiful face carved in relief upon ivory, and delicately enriched with flesh tints.

"This was the work of an Athenian who was greatly skilled in such art. This face has ever been in my thoughts. No other face of woman ever displaced it from my constant dream by day and by night, until——"

"Speak no more of that," said Deborah. "Let no stranger supplant your mother's image in your love."

"At my father's death," resumed Dion, "I was made a page in the household of Perseus, who succeeded Philip, until I was strong enough to carry a sword. Since then the camp has been my home. I fought for my King until he was utterly overthrown by the Romans; then I became a wanderer. Hoping that Antiochus would war against my old enemy the Romans, I gave him my sword. I did not seek such work as we have done here. But enough about myself. Pledge me, Deborah, that you will not go again to the army."

"Again to the army?" exclaimed Deborah. "Why, when you found me at the Wady, did you not entreat me to return to my home here? And have I not done so?"

"And it was well," replied Dion. "But it was said

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that at the fight yesterday, the daughter of Elkiah encouraged the Jews. Your name was heard shouted like a battle cry by the Maccabæans."

"My name!" said Deborah, in well-feigned amazement. "Captain Dion, surely that bruise on your brow tells of some more serious blow you must have received, to have imagined that you heard my name. And have you not found me here?"

"Yes, I can give the lie to the rumor about your being in the battle; and I will swear by Jehovah and all the gods, that I know to the contrary, if the story should ever be repeated to your injury among the people of the city."

"Do not swear it, Dion. If you believe in our God, keep His commandment which says, 'Thou shalt not take the Name of God in vain,' and for a Greek to swear as you propose to do would surely be in vain."

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XXVI

TO UNMASK THE PRINCESS

HE panic in Jerusalem soon gave place to a sense of security. This was due not only to the fact that the Maccabæans had not followed up their victory and attacked the city, but also in large measure to the quieting counsel of Captain Dion.

"The defeat at Bethhoron," he declared, "was owing not to any superior force of the Jews, but to the folly of General Seron in marching his army so as to invite assault. Indeed, when the forward phalanges recoiled upon those coming after, the Greeks defeated themselves. That disaster might have occurred had no enemy attacked us. But the force that Judas has, while sufficient to start a panic by its sudden irruption under such circumstances, is too small to attempt the capture of the city. His men are only peasants, and without armaments of siege. Upon the walls one man could withstand many assailants; and from within the citadel a woman might resist a company of men. Beside this, intelligence has come that Lysias, the new Governor, has despatched our most noted generals, Ptolemy, Nicanor, and Gorgias, with a force of forty thousand footmen and seven thousand horse to utterly exterminate the Maccabæans. If the rebels elude our new armies, it will be only by leaving

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Judea, and taking refuge across the Jordan in the mountains of Moab, where they will be as harmless to Jerusalem as are the beasts which infest those wilds."

Under such counsel the people were calmed. As the terrible Judas did not appear at the gate of the city—nor, as some imagined, like a bat as big as a cloud, scale the walls with armed men under his wings—life resumed its usual course among the inhabitants.

The reaction from fright did not even stop with a general sense of security. The pleasure-loving people sought to recompense their days of abstinence by extravagant indulgence.

In this they were charmingly led by the Princess Helena, whose grief for Apollonius had been completely healed, if rumor were correct, by the attentions of Glaucon. The enamored man had purchased her favor by a relinquishment to her of his interest in the estate of Shattuck. This transaction, told by Helena in confidence to Lydia, had come to the knowledge of her husband Menelaos, the High Priest, who, claiming to be partner with the renegade Jew in all ventures that paid, insisted upon Glaucon's turning over to him, as through former agreement, one-half the estimated prospective value of the estate. An open breach between the two men was prevented by a stroke of business shrewdness manipulated by the two women. Glaucon was induced to repurchase the claim by payment to the Princess of a sum of ready money; which money, it is needless to say, was shared by that gracious lady with the High Priest himself, who still retained his half interest in the Shattuck property.

Glaucon was readily reconciled to his loss through

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this deal, not only by the affectionate rewards of his mistress, but by new discoveries relative to the estate of Shattuck. Its value was greater than he had at first surmised, embracing heavy mortgages upon adjacent property.

All this time Glaucon's relations with the Princess were an offense to Deborah which, with all her art, she could scarcely conceal. She must tear the fair veil from this hideous creature. But how could she do so without confessing her own double life, since it was in the spy's disguise she had discovered all that she really knew of the woman? In her remonstrances with Glaucon she dared not go beyond interrogations and insinuations, which her brother resented with warmth.

"If we have not known her, others have," said he. "Her coming to meet Apollonius in Samaria was an event in the camp."

"And excited no scandal?"

"Scandal? Hera, the wife and sister of Jove, did not escape the taunt of tongues. The fairer the flower the fouler the insect that stings it. You yourself, Berenice, have had unsavory things said of you; but who would believe them?"

"Still," interposed Deborah, "you know for a certainty nothing about her lineage."

"She has told me all," replied Glaucon. "The blood of the great Alexander is in her veins, mingled with that of the Ptolemies. But do you not see her royalty in her very look and form and manner? The gods do not make such caskets except for priceless gems."

"The hetæræ of Greece are the fairest women," suggested Deborah, with a tone of contempt.

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"But have you not seen how choice she is in the selection of her friends?" argued he. "In Jerusalem she receives to her intimacy only those of the most dignified position, like the house of Menelaos—and the house of Glaucon."

"But tell me, brother, how many talents has she picked from your purse?"

Glaucon colored, but smiled, as he replied: "Well, is not that, too, a princely habit?"

He quickly diverted the conversation from the uncomfortable direction it was taking. The Princess had humiliated him in his own eyes by outwitting him in the Shattuck matter; and as a marred mirror avenges itself by marring the reflection cast upon it, so the image of Helena's virtue had now at least one fault in Glaucon's judgment. She was over sharp for him; an offense which at brief moments fretted his love. But he was too proud to admit that Deborah had touched a spot in him already sensitive through irritation, and quickly resumed the praise of the Princess.

"How divinely she speaks! and upon what themes! Only courts have such instructors as she has had. Alexander was not better taught by Aristotle."

"Perhaps she sings and dances as well. Has she exhibited these accomplishments also?" asked Deborah.

"How should I know of these things? My little sister, educated as you have been in the narrowness of our former Jewish life, you have not learned that a free-born Greek woman, much more one of aristocratic family, is never allowed to reveal to the other sex such accomplishments as you mention, even if

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she possesses them. These arts of singing and dancing, beautiful as they are, are left to the slave caste for performance. Athena is not Terpsichore. But, by the way, there are some fine artists of that sort in Jerusalem. Several women noted for their beauty of voice and limb came from Antioch with the officers of Seron. They were nearly trodden to death in the flight. They were found near Bethhoron, and brought to the city, where we need entertainment. Meton, the chief of the city garrison, had them at the castle last night; and I can get them here. Our Princess Helena and Lydia, with Menelaos, will make a company before which they will be proud to display their parts."

"Not here, Benjamin, in our father's house, not here."

"Then in the house of Menelaos."

"Not there, I beg you; for Menelaos bears the name of High Priest. Let us at least respect the customs of Israel, if we no longer have its faith."

"Let it then be in the Princess' house. She has no such silly scruples," replied Glaucon petulantly. "It is the custom of the aristocracy of Greece to hire their entertainers; poets to recite, orators to declaim, pantomimists, dancers, players on instruments and singers. Helena will arrange it all, if I ask her."

"And if you pay for it?" suggested Deborah, as Glaucon hurried away to carry out his new conceit.

Deborah watched the curtain through which he had passed. Dark shadows were flung upon her face from darker thoughts within. She paced the floor as restively as a caged panther. The convulsive movement of her fingers was as if they were clutching

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and stifling some hideous insect which defiled them, and which she would fling away when she had killed it.

"How long is this to be?" she murmured. "But that by my abiding here Jerusalem will be the sooner rid of all this abomination, I would go to the camp—or to the desert. But here I can best serve Judas. Patience! Patience! But this impostor, this Princess, forsooth! She must be unmasked."

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XXVII

THE QUEEN OF THE GROVE

THE court around which the house of Helena was built had, through liberal draft upon the Princess' taste and Glaucon's purse, been prepared for the entertainment. The jet of water which ordinarily rose in the centre of the court was turned off, and the little marble basin in which the bronze lotus leaves seemed to float was now covered over with a platform extended and raised sufficiently to display the performance.

Helena's nose turned too much upward for a Greek ideal when, late in the day, she contemplated the meagre decorations. Glaucon had hired a number of men and boys to gather wild flowers from the fields; but the dread of the ubiquitous Judas had kept these gleaners within a few rods of the city gate. Lamps enclosed in bags of various-colored linen and silk were substituted for the lanterns of brass and silver and opalescent stones which anciently had been the common adornment of the houses of the well-to-do people.

But whatever was lacking in these respects was compensated by the brilliancy of the chamber which, raised three steps above the pavement, opened upon the court. This place was strewn with cushions and skins of tiger and fox, so that the floor was not unlike the body of a vast peacock lying with

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extended wings and tail. Amid these, and upon the divans which ran round the three sides of the chamber, reclined fair women; and hovering over them, like humming-birds seeking the sweet of flowers, stood high officers from the garrison, and a few of the richest of the Greek priests in gala dress.

Menelaos asserted the prerogative of his rank, and reclined with the fair sex. Glaucon, as chief patron of the show, and more than patron of the hostess, assumed a similar privilege.

"Is she not beautiful, my sister?" whispered the Jew as Helena, having duly saluted her guests, with a wave of the hand indicated the beginning of the entertainment.

Helena evidently overheard the compliment, and rewarded Glaucon with a smile that would have captivated any voluptuary, though he were not already infatuated, as was her present victim.

"She is very fair," replied Deborah.

"A palm-tree is not more stately among juniper bushes than Helena among women," said the enamored man.

"Rather say as graceful as a spotted serpent coiling about a palm-tree," interjected his sister. "What limbs for a dancer!"

Glaucon interpreted her comment to apply to another woman, who at the moment seemed to have materialized out of the tangled lamp rays, and appeared upon the platform in the court. This airy being stood long enough to assure the spectators that she was of real flesh and blood. Then, with hands outspread, she pivoted herself upon the slender point of her foot, and gyrated with as little apparent muscular effort as that of the wand which

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a juggler twirls upon his finger. Two other women joined her. Together they writhed in the set forms of a dance, which was designed to show through thin drapery the fine contour of their persons, the proportion of their limbs, and grace of motion.

"Bravo!" cried Menelaos, tossing a handful of gold coins. As they rang upon the pavement, the dancers, without stopping or marring their orderly movements, picked up the gleaming spots.

"Bravo!" echoed Glaucon. "I have never seen it better done. I remember the same figures executed by the famous Thessalian sisters at Antioch. You recall the dance, do you not?"

"I am not sufficiently versed in the art to recognize the movements," replied the Priest.

"The wine will clear your wits," responded Glaucon, nodding to the Princess for approval, which was so sweetly given that it proved sufficient intoxicant to the Jew without need of any from the cup. He clapped his hands, signalling to the servants, who filled the great goblet.

"This wine," said Glaucon, "I had sent from the capital as a gift to our fair hostess. Let her first spice it with a touch of her lips."

The Princess acknowledged the excellence of Glaucon's choice by quaffing deeply, and then passed the golden vessel to her guests.

The girls again appeared, one carrying a cythera, another a tambour, the third castanets. The first sang, to the accompaniment of her instrument, a love song. Her voice had much natural sweetness, and gave evidence of cultivation; but the notes soon became husky and harsh, as if age-worn, although the singer could scarcely have passed her first score

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of years. It gave proof of the dissipation which soon ends the career of women of her class, unless they are possessed of sufficient ambition and will to practise a measure of present self-restraint for the sake of longer future indulgence. The two other girls joined in the chorus with tambour and castanets, and afterwards executed a dance which was pantomimic of the song.

Was it the gold that excited them, or is there a spirit of the dance which resides somewhere in the air or in the light, and enters the bodies of its votaries? These women became ecstatic; they seemed to emerge from themselves, and to become each a living presence of Terpsichore. They closed their eyes as if they danced in sleep. Their lips were parted to inhale the intoxicating breath of their goddess, who should thus supply the energy which physical motion exhausted. The timing of their feet became as pulse-beats, rhythmic, strong, flinging them through the forms of the dance, as a fever throb whirls one through the maze of fantastic visions. They bent until their dishevelled hair touched the floor, like stalks of grain beneath the weight of golden tassels. Then, as the wind lifts the stalk and flings high its bannered top, the women became erect. With instruments above their heads, they swirled, each like a glistening whirlpool, until the spectators were dizzied.

During the performance Helena had spiced the wine more than once with her lips as she passed the cup to Glaucon.

"The dance is shamefully poor," said she. "How that girl mouthed her words, and failed to give the right accent! The click of the castanets is not timed

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to her motions. And the movement of her ankles—as awkward as if her legs were flail-sticks. The girls are not artists. Let them sing again, and I will show them how."

She rose from the divan and, seizing the cythera from the hand of one of the performers, rendered the song with wonderful power. Now Helena's notes floated as buoyantly as those of a lark, and anon sank into exquisite softness and depth, as blue wings sink into the azure. Then, dropping from her shoulders her outer robe, with snapping fingers in lieu of castanets, she gave the dance.

Helena's figure had evidently once been of that perfect balance which makes the impression of being without weight, and which, with the aid of proper draperies, gives the illusion of floating in the air. But her body had clearly taken on solidity, and a distribution of substance better adapted to one who would pose in stateliness than to one who would play the sylph. There is a grace of motion and another grace of inertia. Very young persons ordinarily monopolize the former; the latter is the compensation which nature gives for advancing years. Helena did not realize the grade she had attained in beautiful womanhood—not an uncommon inadvertence of her sex. Otherwise she danced with faultless art—art evidently acquired only through careful instruction and lengthened practice; the art which, according to Glaucon, was forbidden to princely personages and free-born women among the Greeks. Her performance ended in an attitude illustrative of the closing lines of the song, in which the singer accepts the embrace of her lover. Helena's face flushed with the excitement of the exercise. Her

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eyes flickered unsteadily through the effect of the wine. As the last note died upon her lips she reached out her hands to Glaucon.

Whether the Jew was dazed by the superb acting, or by the unexpected revelation on the part of the actress, we may not say—but dazed he seemed, for he sat stupidly still.

His irresponsive look startled, if it did not sober, the dancer. She gazed about her; put her hand to her head, as if to realize her identity; and, tripping upon the robe which she had dropped from her hand, fell into her seat.

"I must be ill," she said. "Give me—give me—some wine."

One by one her guests, with such semblance of courtesy as the Princess' condition allowed them to render, took their departure; but not until one of the dancing women was heard to declare:

"I will bet my garters that she is none other than the great Clarissa herself; for I am sure that the old Queen of the Grove of Daphne could not have done it better. Did you catch the trill?"

"Aye, and the long step and the short one. 'Beauty's Limp' they call it. Clarissa invented that, and all the girls in the Grove practised it; but they say that nobody could do it perfectly except herself."

"I think that the Princess did it splendidly, except that her flesh wobbled; she's too fat."

"What became of the Queen of the Grove?"

"I have heard that she went away with General Apollonius. I will wager my silver anklets against your bronze ones that Clarissa came down to Jerusalem when Apollonius was killed, and that she has been taken up by that fig-headed fellow who ordered

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the drink. The Princess! Ha, ha! She's the Queen —our Queen of Daphne! If she comes out again I will fall down at her feet, and bite off a piece of her big toe to carry back to Antioch as a memento; that is, if we ever get out of this Jewish hole."

"May the gods favor us as well as they have Clarissa!" was her companion's reply.

"Aye, when we get so heavy in the thighs, and so stiff in the joints. When that comes I, too, will sell what is left of me to a Jew. But let's have a drink."

She threw a kiss at a Greek officer leaving the court, and bent over the wine crater, singing:

Inside heat for outside heat,
Good for both the head and feet.
Give me love and give me wine.
Give me both, or I'm not thine. Tra-la!

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XXVIII

A PRISONER

APTAIN Dion was not at the house of Helena the night of the entertainment. He was more seriously engaged with Meton, the Commandant at the citadel. The two men sat on opposite sides of a narrow oaken table. This was the only furniture of the stone-encased apartment, except the low stools the men occupied, some changes of armor that hung from the bronze pegs in the walls, a soldier's chest, and a tankard and goblets which stood between the Commandant and his guest. The men were in striking contrast. Meton was short, broad-shouldered, square-headed, crab-eyed, with complexion which might have been due to weather exposure or overmuch indulgence in wine—doubtless to both.

"I appreciate your feeling in regard to so fine a woman," said the Commandant, "and I have no doubt that she rewards your good offices with personal favors. No offence, my friend, no offence! for were I younger I should prize a woman's smile as highly as you do. But I tell you, Captain, she must be seized."

"With proper deference to your opinion," responded Dion, "I am not prepared to admit the force of your reasons for suspecting her. Indeed, I am quite sure that I can disprove what her enemies say of her. But, passing that, it were impolitic to lay hands on one so close to Glaucon and the High Priest."

"Glaucon! He has not a shred of influence in Je-

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rusalem except as Menelaos allows him to pose under his shadow. And listen, Captain,"—lowering his voice and glancing furtively about the apartment—"Menelaos is through with Glaucon. The Jew has about wound up his tether, and is of no more use to the Priest than a date pit is to the pulp after it has ripened. It is the High Priest himself who has secured evidence against the woman. I do not praise his purpose; but Menelaos, the circumcised hypocrite, would be as false to us Greeks as he has been to his own race, if his greed led that way. Just now he is weighting his dice to get possession of the estate of Elkiah, which they say includes that of Ben Shattuck. If this Berenice, or Deborah, or whatever her name may be, can be proved to be in league with the Maccabæans, it will be sufficient for the King, which is another name for the High Priest, to confiscate the property; since he would not trust Glaucon, who harbors her in his house. It was different when she was thought to be dead."

"But what evidence has been secured?" asked Dion with simulated calmness, which one less stolid than his companion would have seen to cover deep excitement.

"Evidence? Evidence in abundance! Though I confess to you, Captain, I don't believe a word of it any more than you do. The woman is scarcely more than a child, and yet the Princess is ready to swear that she was once a Jewish spy whom she herself had seen about the camp of Apollonius before his blunder at the Wady. Faugh! It is incredible. If fawns were used as hounds to scent out leopards, then Glaucon's sister might be a spy."

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"Is the Princess' word all we have for the accusation?"

"No. We have caught two men who were with Judas; they will swear for the sake of their lives—and men will swear anything for that—that the daughter of Elkiah was with the rebels just before the battle of Bethhoron."

"But I could swear that she was not, for I myself saw her in her brother's house the very night of the battle," cried Dion, bringing his fist down upon the table that separated them. "I will put my word against the two traitors; and which will you take, General Meton?"

"Quiet, Captain! quiet! or I will believe the report that her black eyes have bewitched you. Whose word will I take—yours or the Jews'? Why, theirs, of course, since we will not allow you to testify at all. Captain, you and I know that this is not an affair of justice, but only a thread in some web the High Priest and the Princess are spinning. But what of that? Neither of us is big enough to withstand Menelaos; and I, for one, will not attempt it. The woman must be seized."

"But does the law of our service permit an accused woman no defendant?"

"No defendant will be needed in this case. My orders are peremptory. They come from General Gorgias, that she shall be arrested, and held until his arrival in the city, when he himself will judge the case. But there is hope for her. She is marvellously beautiful, though her eyes have too much lightning in them for me. Gorgias is an artist in flesh; and as the judges did in Phryne's case, he will find as many witnesses of her innocence as

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she has charms. But, Captain, I can serve your fancy. For your interest in the woman I will put her custody into your hands until Gorgias comes. You certainly will not object to that, or you have colder blood than I credit your years with. You may bring her to the citadel, or you may guard her in her own house, in your arms if you want to; but you know our laws—your life for hers if she escapes. First, however, her accusation must be published. On this the High Priest insists. Captain, do you accept her custody, or shall I send another?"

"Under such circumstances, of course I accept," replied Dion, rising.

"Well," said Meton, laughing, "then I command you, for I see you want to. Only don't fall in love with her overmuch, or I shall be jealous of my appointment and revoke it. One cup more with me, Captain; and speak a good word for me with the Princess; for when this pup of a Jew, Glaucon, is out of the way, I may myself forget that I am not young, and play the suitor."

Early the following morning a tall sarissa and broad-brimmed hat sentinelled the house of Glaucon. Another soldier was stationed just within the doorway, while half a score lounged about the court, under command of Captain Dion.

The news of Deborah's arrest produced excitement and some consternation throughout the city; for while Glaucon was hated, even as he was envied, for his ill-gotten successes, nearly all the renegade Jews in Jerusalem were conscious of serving the King from the same greedy motives, and feared for themselves now that the High Priest had turned against one of his own kind.

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"Who next?" was everywhere asked in whispers.

Captain Dion had his headquarters in the familiar guest room of the house of Glaucon. He made known to Deborah the accusation against her.

"Deborah, I am here to protect as well as guard you," he protested. "You must escape. Let me go with you, and if necessary die for you. What is one soldier less to the armies of Antiochus? But a life poured out in love's dear sake, ah! that would be like a goblet of wine spilled upon an altar. Willingly would I thus serve you, and I believe it would be a sacrifice pleasing to your God."

Deborah was a long time silent. At length she said:

"Dion, will you do anything, everything, for me?"

"Anything, everything," exclaimed the eager man. "Speak the word, and I will go with you to the camp of the Jews, or I will flee with you to the tents beyond Jordan. Anything, everything," cried he, abandoning himself to the sway of his passion.

"There is nothing I can ask that you will not do? Are you sure? May I test you again?"

"There is nothing, nothing that I will not do for you. I swear it. Test me. I long to prove myself."

"Then, Dion, I command you to remain where you are. Do your duty as a Greek soldier. Guard me if you may. Lead me forth to execution if you must. Let General Gorgias have his will with me. I will not use your love to swerve you a hair's breadth from your sworn duty to the service you are engaged in."

"But, Deborah, how could I do this? You are falsely accused. Never was there a more damnable

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lie. I myself can swear that you were not with the Jews at the battle, for here I saw you."

Deborah turned away and paced the apartment; then quickly turned:

"Dion, you are my custodian. More than that, I make you my judge. You shall hear my confession. I am not falsely accused. I am a Jewish spy. I forbid that you swear to my innocence. Others may speak untruth, but I will confess the facts before the tribunal rather than your lips shall utter a word that is false."

Dion heard with amazement, not so much at her statement, for he had more than suspected its truth, but at this new revelation of Deborah's spirit. He exclaimed ardently:

"Then flee with me. Come! Come! This night we may be far away, among your own people, among the tribesmen beyond Moab; or we will go to Egypt, or to Greece, or to Rome. My life is yours, Deborah, whenever and for whatever you may need me. Come! We can make safe flight."

"No, Dion. Though I may not say I love you, I esteem you too much as my friend, as my father's friend, to let you sacrifice your good name for me. Be true to your duty here, until God Himself give deliverance to His people."

"There is no deliverance for your people, Deborah," cried the Greek in despair. "The King's armies are already gathering for another ascent from the plain of Sharon. Within three weeks they will sweep all this land as the tide of the Great Sea covers the sands when the north wind blows."

"Then, why will not you go with your men?" exclaimed Deborah, haughtily. "It is better to fight

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on the high field than to be left behind to guard a girl. Honor and fame are there—here nothing for a great soul; nothing for one who has been trained in the court of Philip and in the army of Perseus of Macedon."

Her attitude and voice were so dramatic that they might have turned even Glaucon into a hero.

Then her tones became taunting: "Has Dion, son of General Agathocles, no ambition? Are you like a new-born ant that has wings on its back, but suffers them to be torn off by its sisters? Oh, Dion, if I were a man, think you I would be content to play the cat at a mouse-hole, as you are doing here, when the hosts are marching? Go! Let Meton send his citadel cooks. They will be sufficient to watch me here. But not you, Dion! Give up your custody, I beg you."

Dion caught her martial spirit, and exclaimed:

"Ah, if you were a man, Deborah, I would love you as your ancient Prince Jonathan did the heroic David. Side by side we would fight even for the Jews' cause. I swear it! But," he dropped his voice, and, weighing every word with sincerity and decision, added, "Deborah, I shall remain here with you, unless you will go with me."

Deborah's manner instantly changed. Her soldierly enthusiasm became the transport of a prophetess.

"Dion, believe me, the host of Gorgias will never make the ascent to Jerusalem. I know it. The sword of our God is in the hand of Judas. The child Caleb sat yesterday looking toward the west, his eyes expanded more largely than ever. 'What do you see?' I asked; for in such moods I have found him to be gifted with a seer's sight.

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"'I see,' said he, 'the armies of the Gentiles. They swarm like bees toward the towers of Jerusalem. Now they are at Emmaus. But the sword of the Lord and of Judas gleams through the air. It severs the flying host. See! see! The bees have lost their guidance. They scatter everywhere. They dissolve like smoke in the air!' I know not where the child gets such visions, but more oft than otherwise they come true."

Dion shook his head.

"Deborah, if your God shall again work miracles this dream may become true; but if Judas were in league with Egypt or Rome he could not stop the advance of Gorgias. Any one of the three Greek armies can destroy the Maccabæans, while the others sweep the land, as freely as the breezes blow, from Samaria to the South Desert. I thank God that neither you nor I shall be in the coming battle. Why, Deborah, should I fight? How can I care whether Antiochus widen his empire, and rob more lands to spend his revenues on new favorites, such as those about us here? But I could fight for a cause, for something I esteemed holy, as I do yours. I believe that you could touch me and transform me into—into a Jew. One thing I vow: If Judas escape the oncoming armies I will believe in Caleb's vision. I will offer your great champion my sword at the gate of Jerusalem, and confess that he is the long-promised Deliverer whom all people as well as yours believe will some day come to restore right boundaries and exalt good men. This I swear, and make your sweet lips witness. Let them call me traitor if I keep not this vow."

"Did then," replied Deborah, "our blind seer dream

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again correctly? He said that he saw Dion wearing a Jew's shirt beneath his Greek toga. But, Dion, do not follow such impulses. Your career is that of a soldier. In that occupation you may acquire renown, riches, power; for I myself once heard one of your generals say that there was more genius for command in Dion's head than in the whole war councils of the King. Only be as just as you are brave—such men are needed everywhere. But alas! too well I know that, unless God helps, one will find only poverty and suffering and death among the Jews. Our reward is not here, but in that unknown land where we believe our fathers who have fallen asleep wake and walk. Without that sure faith, Dion, you must not become a Jew. But we must part. Call me when the swordsman or jailer is ready—and I will forgive you."

She retired into her apartment.

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XXIX

A RAID

BETWEEN the conflict of his own thoughts and Glaucon's outbursts of rage at the indignity cast upon his house, the day passed drearily for Captain Dion. But the night brought new excitement.

The narrowness of the streets made them dark almost as soon as the glints of the setting sun had climbed above the parapets and vanished into the upper air. No lamps were now burning, as in peaceful times, at the doorways of the houses. Upon the city walls and at the great gates loomed the outlines of the sentinels, the click of whose sarissas, brought to the ground at each turn on their beats, alone broke the stillness. The streets were deserted, except as here and there a light blinked through the opening door of some low resort, out of which revellers stumbled into the night; or as some thief, with bare and noiseless feet, evaded a house guard who was sleeping before the gate of an official or protected inhabitant.

It was about the sixth hour when three shadows, like so many condensations of the night itself, moved up the Street of David from the direction of the Temple. In a moment as many more followed. Others came stealthily out of the alleys, and appeared suddenly in the main street, as if they were exhalations from the pools of water between the great

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stones of the pavement. If one had owl's eyes one might have detected more of these moving patches of darkness, some taking covert behind the projecting lattice-work of the bazaar windows, or within the screening lintels of the doorways. At first they seemed like common night waifs seeking places to sleep; but as sticks in a whirlpool make each its own gyrations, then float out through a common channel, so all these men drifted toward the house of Glaucon.

The sentinel stationed there observed one such shadow near him, and challenged it. While engaged in attempting to unravel what he thought were the comer's drunken accents into intelligible words, a grip from behind was upon his throat, and before he could utter an outcry a short sword had entered his body.

A rap on the door brought the challenge, to which the Greek watch-word "Avenge Bethhoron" was given. The cross-bar had scarcely lifted when in poured a score of men. The door-keeper fell, and in a few moments all the Greek guard were silent in their blood, except Captain Dion who, standing at vantage upon the platform of the room leading from the court, by splendid sword-play held off his assailants. The leader of the attacking party, after watching for a moment the uneven fight, laid his sword across the swords of the men.

"Back, men! I will deal with this fellow."

The speaker was a short but powerfully built man. His head was protected by a helmet of thick leather, which was in keeping with the black, coarse, chain-knit, iron corsage that covered his upper person. His form was as compact and as lithe as that

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of a leopard, and his pose that of equal alertness. Without for an instant letting his sword drop from its position for thrust, and holding Dion at guard as the weapon seemed to search his body for a vulnerable point, the man spoke:

"You are in command here?"

"When I had any one to command," replied Dion, glancing at the dead bodies lying about the court. "But who are you?"

"No matter who," replied the invader; "I demand the person of the daughter of Elkiah."

"My life is forfeit for her," replied Dion. "Come on."

His challenge was not accepted by his antagonist, who, holding his weapon in guard, asked, "Your name, gallant Greek?"

"Captain Dion, at your service, sir. Come on."

The man lowered his sword.

"Retire, men. Captain Dion, a word with you."

"Tell me first by whose authority you have entered here," asked Dion.

"By the authority of the God of Israel, and Judas, son of Mattathias, we came. And now, as you can see, since your comrades are dead, we remain here by authority of our own swords. Twenty to one is scarcely fair play, and we have that vantage of you. Yield!"

Captain Dion was not more persuaded by the fighting odds against him than he was led by certain other considerations to give up the fight. He at once replied:

"I yield upon one condition—that no harm shall come to the lady Deborah."

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"Our purposes seem to be one," replied the stranger. "Is the name of Jonathan, brother of Judas, sufficient guarantee for her safety?"

"Jonathan!" ejaculated Dion. "And yet your entrance in spite of our guards might have made me suspect one surnamed 'The Wily.' Have you Maccabæans taken the city?"

"It is enough that we have taken this house, and that you are our prisoner. Will you deliver the woman to us, or shall we take her out over your body? The choice is yours."

"I am a Greek soldier," said Dion. "My life will be forfeit by our own rules if I yield. My honor will at least be sustained if I fall guarding my charge."

He struck the attitude of defense.

"I had rather fall beneath the hands of twenty foemen, than be led out to die like a dog by my own people. Come on! You have my answer."

Jonathan did not move.

"Guard yourself, then!" said Dion, advancing. Jonathan made no sign of self-defense.

Dion lowered his sword. "I cannot kill a man who will not fight."

"Plainly not. You are not a soldier of that sort, and thus are unlike your fellow Greeks," said the Maccabæan.

"Do not taunt me," was the reply. "I believe that the daughter of Elkiah will be safer with Jonathan than with myself. For her sake I yield."

He presented his weapon.

"Not so, Captain Dion," replied the Jew. "Keep your sword. You may need it to defend yourself from others. Now lead me to the lady Deborah. I

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respect her too highly to invade her privacy without heralding by her appointed guardian. Use your sword on me, Captain Dion, if I force her to do aught against her will. We two will go alone."

Jonathan bade his men retire.

The frightened servants had hidden away at the first noise of the encounter; but as the two men approached Deborah's apartment their way was blocked by old Huldah, who stood with arms akimbo, and behind her Ephraim.

"The lady Deborah is ill, and no one can see her," cried Huldah, as valiantly as if Ephraim were a whole battalion supporting her.

"Here is a military exigency which I fear the tactics of neither Greek nor Jew is equal to," laughed Jonathan. "We should have brought up our battering rams."

It is difficult to surmise what would have been the issue of this impending collision between a noted warrior and the puissant Huldah, had not little Caleb appeared at the instant the battle was about to be joined. Recognizing the voice of his friend of the Rocks, he ran to him with a delighted cry:

"Jonathan! Jonathan!"

"My child!" cried the Maccabæan with equal eagerness, as he caught the lad to his arms. "And Deborah, where is she?"

"Why, Deborah is gone two hours since," exclaimed the child. "She is now far away as Mizpah, or maybe Bethel. But, Jonathan, have we taken the city yet? And was Gorgias killed as I saw in my dream?"

"The Lord grant that your dream may be as that

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of Gideon's soldiers the night before the destruction of the Philistines, when a barley cake overturned a tent," said Jonathan, kissing the blind eyes. "Deborah is gone? Where then, Captain Dion, is your boasted protection of this woman, whom you say you were ordered to guard? If she could go and come without your permission, why might not others have captured her? It is well that I, a Jew, have been ordered to relieve guard here to-night, since you, a Greek, have not kept it."

"Your words are deserved," replied Dion, bewildered by Caleb's news. "I cannot account for it. Deborah has not passed out by the court gateway into the street, that I can swear. Nor do I think she has flown through the air."

"For aught you know, Sir Greek, she may have done so. Remember that you are in the Jews' land. Here you must be prepared to believe such things as were never dreamed of by your people. This is, as you have doubtless heard, a land of miracles. Every hill and cave has a story, as true as that Deborah has outwitted your senses. But pardon my mirth, Captain. I see that your head sits lightly on your shoulders for having let your bird break cage, and I suggest that, if you do not care to submit your neck to the whim of your superior officer, you go with us. I doubt not we can put you again in charge of your fair captive, or at least where you will risk nothing if you avow that she escaped with your connivance. I think, Captain, that you will have to go with us. Come."

Captain Dion put forth his hands.

"You may bind me."

"You are too brave a man for that," replied

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Jonathan. "The name of Dion is not unknown to us. You may bind yourself with your word. It will suffice. Besides, you will need both hands in scrambling out of this town, and maybe your sword, for——"

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XXX

FOILED

ONATHAN'S sentence was not completed. There was a sudden sound of the quick-timed, regular tramp of many feet in the street. Meton, hearing of the commotion in the house of Glaucon, had sent thither a detachment from the citadel. There were a few sharp words of command outside, followed by the crashing in of the gate. Then came a moment's silence. This was while the Greek rescuers were forming for a dash through the portal; for they knew that the foremost would fall beneath the unseen swords that were ready to meet them.

Jonathan and his men were already in the breach. Man after man dropped in his tracks as the Greeks crossed the threshold. The assailants, though baffled, kept the gate open by thrusting back of the hinges a piece of timber which they had used as a sort of battering ram. The passage was soon choked with a pile of dead bodies. The Greeks then massed a number of spearmen who, with their bristling points thrust far ahead of them, essayed to rush their antagonists. This ruse was unfortunate; for no sooner were the spear-heads beyond the lintels than they were grasped by strong hands, and thrown upward, thus leaving the unprotected bodies of those who had used them at the mercy of the Jews' swords.

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The Greeks had surely lost the fight had not Meton ordered another party of his men to enter the adjacent houses, climb to the roofs, and from them reach that of the house of Glaucon. Having gained this advantage, they poured down in a torrent of destruction. The Greek servants were spared. Huldah and Ephraim in some mysterious manner disappeared. Glaucon, or what was left of the living man, since his fright had been well-nigh as fatal to him as a stone from a catapult would have been, was dragged from beneath a divan, but only to be shoved back again as into a place of security, while a soldier was set to prod him if he should attempt to come out.

An officer finding Dion, laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"Captain, I must put you under arrest. You will harbor me no ill will if I obey my orders?"

"Do your duty, Mercedes, or I myself will report you," replied Dion.

The Captain extended his hands, which were quickly bound with his own belt.

The uneven fight was soon over in the court. A score of Jews were either slain or captured, though more than twice that number of their antagonists measured their lengths upon the pavement. One lay with his head in the fountain basin at the feet of Aphrodite, and stared with his dead eyes into the face of the marble beauty that gazed down into them.

"Who is the leader of this gang of rebels?" asked Meton.

"The Lord of Hosts is our leader!" said one of the captives.

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"The lord of the host?" queried Meton. "Has then the great Judas fallen into my trap? Shade of Apollonius! this is lucky for me. But where is your lord of the host?"

He turned over the bodies of the dead Jews to look at their faces. "He is not here—nor here. None of these have stature enough for the giant."

Jonathan, anxious for the fate of Caleb, had gone seeking for him in the upper part of the house. His way was blocked by an immense Greek who strode across a chamber carrying the blind boy beneath his arm. No sooner had Jonathan spied him than the man's dead hands dropped his burden. But a crowd of soldiers had followed the daring Jew, and now seemed to have him as their captive. Thrusting Caleb behind him, Jonathan kept his assailants at bay by the lightning movement of his blade.

"This way, Jonathan! this way!" cried the lad; and, so guided, Jonathan retreated step by step, now between the opening curtains; now across another chamber; then down a flight of stone steps. At length he was in darkness.

"This way, Jonathan!" sounded the thin voice of the child from the cellar.

The Greeks who came after stopped, being unable to see any object; but thrust with their swords through the darkness.

"Hold off, men, we have him trapped!" shouted one of the leaders. "Ten men guard this stairway. The rest of you go with me to the cellarway in the court. We will pick him out with our spear-points, or burn him out like a fox in a hole; it matters not which way the rascal wants to die. It is the great Judas himself in spite of his size, for

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there is only one man who can handle the sword as this fellow does. But for all that I would have had the better of him just now were it not that that blind brat can see in the dark. Indeed, I stuck him once like a pig at the bottom of the steps."

"You lie," said another. "You stuck me; and but for my hand catching your blade you would have hamstrung me with your jab—jab—jab at everything and nothing. I tell you I had the Jew by the throat, and would have throttled him but for you."

"Had him by the throat?" shouted another. "You had me by the throat. I was in front of you. I shall claim the reward when we get him. I swear it was I that drove him down these steps. I had knocked up his sword, and was closing on him when you put your camel's foot of a fist on my throat."

While some watched by the cellarways, and the leaders consulted upon means to extricate their valiant prey without danger to themselves, Jonathan was being piloted safely by Caleb through the subterranean passage. For a while he followed the lad. They at length came to a place where the path became two. Here Jonathan took the child into his arms.

"From this point I know the way," said he. "When we came in by the crevice in the wall that Meph told us of, we went up that passage until we came out in the Temple court. And there, Caleb, we swore before the broken altar of our Lord to give our lives if need be for your and Deborah's rescue."

"But how did you know of our danger?" queried the lad.

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"Old Ephraim told Meph of her being under arrest in her house, and Meph brought us word at Mizpah. But here is our change of uniform. Let me get out of these vile Greek trappings before they give me some plague. Alas, that our brave men could not come back with us! But we will avenge them yet, the Lord willing."

"Will not Greek clothes serve you better when we come into the fields?" asked Caleb.

"No Greek dares to walk a furlong beyond the walls in the night time," replied Jonathan. "The whole country belongs to the jackals, the foxes, to us, and to God."

"Can you see God's eyes, Jonathan?" asked Caleb as they emerged from the crevice.

"No, not now; the stars are not out to-night; but I can see God's smile, for the day is breaking over Moab. You are tired, little brother. My shoulder must be as hard a saddle as a camel's hump."

Jonathan took the blind child into his arms, and Caleb, with his hands about the soldier's neck, and face hidden in his thick beard, after awhile fell asleep. The child's weight did not weary the strong man, but his spirit, so gentle, so pure, so wise, seemed to Jonathan to mingle with his own, as the water purling from some mountain spring, cool and clean and sweet, mingles with a muddied stream. There were tears on the face of the man of battle, when, just as the day dawned, he laid his sleeping burden down in a nook between the rocks.

A Jewish soldier went by; his iron helmet was slung back. Touching his bared head, he gave the sentinel's watchword, "As the Lord liveth," and

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passed on. And such as he were walking in every by-path and ravine and on every hill-top from Jerusalem to Samaria, watching over the land as faithfully as the stars keep their nightly beats in the heavens. Jonathan bent over the sleeping child, and kissed the little hand that lay against the moss. Then, signalling to another sentry, he pointed to the spot and walked away.

In an hour he returned.

When Jonathan and Caleb reached the camp at Mizpah, they were alarmed to learn that Deborah was not there, nor had she been seen by any one.

Many possible explanations of her absence were suggested, which varied chiefly according to the degree in which anxiety sank toward despair. Most believed that she had failed to pass safely through the cordon of guards, and had been captured by the Greeks.

Others inclined to the opinion that she had fallen into the hands of marauding tribesmen, whose fleet steeds were often seen between the city and the Maccabæan camps. Sometimes a horseman and tall lance would be silhouetted against the sky from distant rising ground, then disappear as quickly as the horned wild goats of the Lebanons at the slightest movement to stalk them. Scouts reported that similar shapes moved like shadows along the hillsides, pausing only in spots where the color of the rock or of tree clumps toned with that of the horse, as by a similar ruse certain birds and lizards escape the observation of their sharpest-eyed enemies.

These apparitions gave credit to rumors that the sheikhs of various tribes were preparing to side with the Greeks. These rumors were at first without in-

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telligible basis, for nothing had as yet occurred to clearly prove any breach of neighborly relations between the peasants of Judea and the herdsmen of the Jordan and eastward. It was as when a coming storm heralds itself to the instincts of birds and cattle, and sets the tree-toads croaking before any shred of a cloud appears in the sky.

Judas sent his scouts eastward. They reported the fleecy indications of unsettled political weather in the multitude of tents which were gathered in hitherto unoccupied positions in the valley of the Jordan and the mountainous regions beyond. The tribesmen were massing. For this there could be but one purpose—to strike Judas' rear. This discovery, which discouraged others, stimulated the champion to keener thought and buoyancy. He had the joy of a sailor at the prospect of high seas.

Yet Judas had his times of moodiness. Jonathan had often remarked to Simon that these spells were never produced by danger, but either by something in Judas' physical condition, or some mysterious sentiment that made him its victim. The report that Deborah had left the city, or something which timed itself with that announcement, now plunged him into the depths. He brooded stolidly. His alertness of faculty took on a seeming lethargy. His brethren tried to rouse him by the news of the movements of the new Greek armies under Gorgias and Nicanor and Lycias, who were reported to have passed down the valley of the Litany, that portal of Syria between the Lebanon ranges through which the invaders of Israel had so often come.

"We must put our men in motion," urged Jonathan.

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"Aye," was Judas' laconic response.
"But when shall we move?" was eagerly asked.
"When the time comes."
"But when will the time come?"
"When I say so." And Judas turned away.

17

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XXXI

THE SHEIKHS

EBORAH'S flight from the city had not been for her own personal safety, else she would have taken Caleb with her. When she emerged from the crevice, instead of going northward toward the fastnesses of the Maccabæans, she turned to the east, at first keeping close to the city wall. The night was dark except for the occasional flashes of lightning, the couriers of a coming storm. In the momentary glare she took in the stations of the few Greek sentinels who patrolled the immediate fields. They were looking for no danger from the direction of the walls, but peered outward, questioning with spear-point every shadow which the sudden flashes projected beyond the rocks and bushes.

It was thus not difficult for Deborah to reach without detection the extreme northeastern angle of the city. She here sat down to watch for opportunity to pass unobserved into the open ground beyond. She thought of the old walls at her back, worn by the storms of centuries, and broken by the war-shocks of many generations; the armored forms close to her, each one like the claw of the monster power of Syria which was crushing, tearing, devouring the nation; the great black sky overhead, like some flying dragon, so vast as to cover and smother the land. How little was she! Only a single fibre in the writhing flesh of the victim! Her life was so

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insignificant! Doubtless before many days she would lay it down, if she remained in the city; perhaps sooner on this adventure.

Her fingers felt between them a tiny berry. "I am less than this," she thought, "for it may abide when I am gone. Yet if I press this seed down into the dirt, it will breed life in its decay. May I not yield something if I fall? What now if I can bring to Judás a hundred men! That will be worth dying for! He would not allow me to make this venture if he knew it. That is well; then that brave heart cannot bear the blame if it miscarry. So I give my life to God and His cause."

She pressed the berry into the ground, and smoothed the dirt above it with her hand.

The lightning split the heavens with terrific shock. A tower above the eastern gate caught the bolt as a shield would ward a flaming dart. The rain came down in torrents. The sentinels retired closer to the walls, drawing nearer together as their line shortened. In a moment Deborah would be discovered! But while their eyes were dazed by another crash she pushed boldly between them and ran.

"What was that?" said a soldier. "I must have stepped upon a jackal."

"It was as big and black as a wolf," was his comrade's reply. "They say the dead Jews' ghosts come back to the city in wolf shapes."

"I heard one the other night. He seemed, from the noise he made, to be walking on two legs with a crutch; but when I came to him he darted in among the bushes, and back to Hades; for there wasn't a sign of him above ground."

Deborah sped down the long slope from the city

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wall to the Kedron, and across it, and up the side of Olivet. She did not see her way, yet kept it, following every turn of the footpath; for she dared not venture upon the high-road, knowing this to be sentinelled. When she heard any sound on the beaten track she crossed the fields, over ditches, around boulders, past garden walls of dried clay. She did not stumble, though she gave no heed to where she stepped. Were her senses and muscles preterhumanly alert, as those of a swallow skimming the ground and striking nothing? Did instinct assert itself over the slower-paced judgment, as in the case of frightened deer and homing pigeons? Did the angels bear her up in their hands according to the promise? She asked not, nor did she even wonder. The inner light of her purpose was so strong that her soul dominated all physical limitation—for a while. At length on Olivet, midway the ascent, she fell utterly exhausted. Then she first realized the weakness of the flesh, and rebelled against it. How long it took to steady the panting breath! and for the heart to stop its violent beating!

After a few moments' rest she rose. Her feet were stones in weight. Would that they had been as hard! for a sharp pain drew her attention to the fact that one foot had broken its sandal, and was bruised and bleeding. She could not run; she trudged on.

She came out upon the broad road, and passed through Bethany. No one accosted her, for the once happy village was now deserted. Even the dogs had followed the people when they fled from the invaders.

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The day broke. The road grew white with its dust, then ruddy with the coming light. Her faintness told her that she hungered, and she remembered that she had made provision for this. She drew from her bosom a handful of bread and dates, and ate. At a spring, where once had stood a khan, she drank amid a circle of bewildered sheep, which bleated and stared at this intruder of what for many months had been their solitude.

She must rest; yet what if she should be too late? Already the tribesmen about Jericho might have begun to fulfil their threat, and move against Judas. These men had been the enemies of her people for ages. Not since Joshua crossed their plain had they been at peace, except at times when the degenerate Jews mingled their blood in marriage with that of these heathen. Toward the Chasidim, those extremists who would purge the land of all but the pure stock of Israel, these tribes had sworn special hatred. Now that the Maccabæans were facing new armies of Syria, the rumor of the fields became the open boast in Jerusalem, that the whole population of the Jordan valley was about to assail Judas' rear; for Antiochus' gold had corrupted every Sheikh from the Sea of Galilee to the Sea of Salt.

And who was she, a girl, to turn these fierce fighters from their remorseless purpose? A straw to change the course of the Jordan! A child's hand to divert from its path an avalanche on the slope of Hermon. Yet a child's hand can give direction to an avalanche, by breaking the frozen front in this or yonder ravine. Doubtless the child would be swept away by the descending mass; but what mattered that?

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Though her limbs scarcely obeyed her will to rise, Deborah could not rest. She might be too late. This fear suddenly became almost a terrible conviction. There were clattering hoof-beats on the hard roadway. She concealed herself behind the ruined wall of the khan. Two horsemen rode slowly up, pausing upon an adjacent knoll, and inspecting the country far and wide. Their horses were almost hidden beneath their housings of network and tassels. This, however, did not conceal the long and slender limbs and narrow flanks of the beasts, their broad, deep breasts and thick necks, which showed that they were of that thorough breed for the rearing of which the Arabs had already become famous.

The two riders were swarthy, almost black. One was young, his sparse beard fringing and breaking the perfect oval of his face. The other was old, unless the deep lines across his brow, like the valleys and gorges about him, had been made by sudden convulsions, the sharp crises of his life. The youth's eyes were like the fountain beside which they stopped—sparkling, yet calm and fully exposed. The old man's eyes were like the pools which one, standing on the cliffs, sees gleaming far down in the deep gorge of the Kedron, as that stream cuts its way through the mountains of rocks which would bar its progress to the Sea of Salt.

In dismounting the elder man seemed the younger, so quick was his motion in taking the long lance from its rest, and planting it in the ground as the tether post for his steed.

"Neither Jews nor Greeks are concerning themselves with us to-day. That is clear, father," said the younger man.

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"It is true, then," said the veteran, "that they are both looking for a battle to the west. Judas' men were only yesterday scouring this part of the country, but they are now withdrawn. That means that the Maccabæan expects another fight with the Greeks speedily, for Judas never calls in his men until he wants them to strike. They are like the fingers on his hand; they turn into a fist only for the blow. We will ride back, Nadan, and advise the camps to move against the Maccabæan to-morrow."

Deborah heard this with consternation. The man was surely Sheikh Yusef, the Arab, the fiercest of the tribesmen of the valley. She must act instantly.

A slight groan attracted the attention of the men. Turning the corner of the ruined wall they detected her crouching form.

"Who is here? By my beard, a woman!"

Deborah rose, and with clasped hands, exclaimed:

"Your pity! Do not harm me!"

"Who are you?" said Yusef. "And what brought you to such a place?"

"I am fleeing from Jerusalem. I am the daughter of Elkiah."

"Elkiah's daughter a fugitive, and in such a plight? Has your brother turned you out? We had heard that he was in high feather with his new friends."

"Alas!" said Deborah, "my brother is himself endangered. All are in danger there. Have you not heard?"

"We have heard nothing. Tell us."

"Not heard!" said Deborah, in feigned surprise. "The Romans, the strong people from the west,

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from over the Great Sea, from beyond Cyprus, beyond Greece, are coming. It is reported that their fleets are seen from the shore; that they have overcome the Syrian ships; that they have made alliance with Egypt; that vast armies, the armies that destroyed Perseus, are about to march through the desert, and come upon Syria by way of the valley. The Greeks in Jerusalem distrust the Jews who have submitted. They believe that my people have played them false, and will turn to the Romans. Meton is slaughtering us."

The two Arabs looked at each other with faces that showed perplexity. They withdrew to a little distance. Deborah could not catch all their words, but enough to know that her ruse was not altogether futile. However well bribed with Greek gold, the tribesmen would not risk the alliance of Antiochus if this new power of Rome were to come upon the scene. The Republic of the West was regarded as invincible along the Great Sea, but had not yet essayed to strike Asia. If the crash of empires were to take place it were wise for the nomadic peoples to throw themselves with neither Greek nor Roman until there were some signs as to which power would prove the stronger.

The older man remounted.

"But, father, we cannot leave the daughter of Elkiah here," said the younger. "She must go with us."

Deborah had risen to her feet. The hood dropped from her head. Was it her grateful look, or only her surpassing beauty, that held the young Arab?

"You will go with us? You can ride?" said he.

"Nay, I must go to my kinsman, Ben Aaron of

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Masada. To seek refuge there I have fled. Tell me the shortest way, I beg of you."

"To Masada? That is a long journey, and rough, and full of dangers. You cannot go there alone."

Nadan held rapid speech with old Yusef, the conclusion of which was this, on his part:

"It is true we must not leave her here, nor can we delay. Take you the woman, Nadan. Cross the gorge of Kedron. By the night you can be at Masada, and by the morning back with us. Nadan, the woman is comely. Were I not needed with the people, she should share my saddle, not yours. No loitering, my son. My salutation to Ben Aaron, the damned Jew!—but it is unwise to damn him in the present emergency. His castle on Masada will be the strongest in the wilderness—when we get it. Speak him fair, and let the gift of his kinswoman be a pledge of peace between us—until we see fit to break it. That woman's breath on your cheek ought to give you soft words for Ben Aaron."

He placed his long lance in its resting strap, bowed his head to the neck of his steed—both a salaam to the woman and a signal of haste to the beast—and disappeared over the hill like an autumn leaf whirled away by the wind.

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XXXII

THE CASTLE OF MASADA

NADAN would have been no true son of Yusef if the commission to escort the fair Jewess had not been a pleasing one; for the old Sheikh was known as the "Solomon of the Tents," and many a Shulamite maiden had looked upon him as "black but comely."

The paternal badinage with his son about the girl's breath upon his cheek was undoubtedly as unwise as it was unnecessary. But Deborah herself saved the young man from all temptation.

When Nadan returned to her she was standing with face uplifted, as when one is looking at some far-distant object in the lower sky. Her eyes did not rest on the summit of Nebo or Pisgah, whose grayish-blue peaks rose like gigantic towers on the agate wall of the mountains of Moab. Beyond them, beyond all the earth, her soul seemed to be drinking from fountains in the sky.

Nadan's approach did not at once divert her rapt attention. The youth felt something like resentment at her indifference to his presence. Did not the maidens of the valley sing and dream the praise of Nadan? And if his comeliness had been less, was he not the richest of the young lords of the tribes, and their most daring rider?

Just now, as he stood beside his splendid steed, one hand upon the lustrous mane, the other grasp-

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ing the tall spear to draw it from its socket in the ground, his attitude was such as to fascinate any lover of a manly form. He was fully conscious of this, and kept his pose at first in the hope that the woman would notice him. Then he remained motionless because the spell which held Deborah looking heavenward also held him staring at her. His feeling of slighted dignity passed away almost as quickly as the shadow of a flying bird. Deborah seemed more than a woman, some priestess illumined with the light of her shrine, which was invisible to all eyes but her own. The Arab felt himself drawn to a kindred worship; at least, he worshipped the worshipper.

Slowly the rhapsody faded from her face. When she turned toward her companion she was simply a woman, with a girlish sweetness and timidity. Nadan had seen a flower which, when the sunlight fell upon it, burst at once from bud to glorious fulness, and when darkness came closed its petals again. Were human beings sometimes gifted with such powers? All his Arab superstitions about genii and other wonderful creatures who live on the borderland between the visible and invisible world were beginning to perplex and awe him, when Deborah's simple and confiding manner reassured him that he had only a human being to deal with, though an exceedingly fascinating one.

"I shall conduct you to Masada," said he, making deep obeisance.

"It need not be," replied Deborah.

"It must be," said the youth, with a tone of authority which, however, indicated that he was commanding himself rather than her. "The way is

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full of dangers. Few ever cross the great gorge of the lower Kedron; and none but those who know the path. All the wild beasts, driven from the open, find lair in its caves and thickets."

"Then I will follow the highway to Jericho, and there take the road by the sea," said Deborah.

"Men might be more cruel than the beasts," was the Arab's reply. "You cannot go alone. If I may not accompany you, I must follow; for my father's bidding I would not dare to disobey. He will require of me an accounting of my safe conduct of you to the fortress of your kinsman."

"Not if I myself release you from the duty."

"You cannot. Yusef is lord of these hills. Besides you are his guest until the shadow of Masada itself protects you. It shall never be said that ill has befallen the daughter of Elkiah anywhere within the echo of Yusef's or Nadan's bugle."

Deborah replied with look and tone that completely won her companion:

"Sheikh Yusef is very gracious. The house of Elkiah will ever remember his kindness this day, and that of his son."

Nadan fell upon one knee, and kissed the hem of her garment.

"I beg you then to lead the way at once," said Deborah, "for we must hasten."

The Arab readjusted the saddle.

"I shall walk," said Deborah.

"That cannot be," replied the young man, catching a glimpse of her broken sandal. "And see, even Emir forbids it."

The horse had thrust his long nose into her hands.

"Emir—the Prince—and does he not deserve the

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name?" said Nadan, who evidently shared his personal conceit with his pride in his beast. "Emir's stock is as old and pure as the fountain of Dûk by the city of Jericho, whose waters they say your prophet Elisha healed—Emir will have no other rider to-day than yourself. See, he himself says so," for the horse was rubbing his head against her shoulder.

Nadan made his hand the stirrup, and lifted Deborah to the saddle.

"Were the daughter of Elkiah as ignorant of horses as they say all Jerusalem women are, Emir would carry you as safely as if he had arms, and you lay within them. But you are no stranger to the saddle. Come, Emir, we must be to-night at Masada."

He patted the head of the horse.

"You remember, my Emir, the tournament you had with Ben Aaron's Nagid, which means the same as Emir? It was Prince against Prince indeed. Our lady should have seen us that day. Eh, Emir?"

The horse shook his long mane, pawed the ground, and whinnied his challenge, as if his master's words were the promise of another contest.

Nadan took the single rein and led the way. Neither spoke for a long while. At length Deborah gave a cry. Emir raised his head, and neighed like the blast of a trumpet.

They had climbed to the summit of a high hill. Before them stretched the plain of the Jordan. To the north a silver thread ran through a vast tapestry of green. To the south was the Sea of Salt, like a shield of bronze inlaid with variegated precious stones, so many were the hues which the soft and

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cloud-flecked light painted upon its surface. The plain of Jordan lay thousands of feet beneath them, a picture bordered on the east by the cliffs of Moab, whose many-colored rocks gleamed like piled fragments of a rainbow, and to the north by the white shoulders of Hermon, like those of a maiden who has not yet learned to shun the eyes of men.

Midway the scene were the gray walls and flattened white domes of Jericho. Scattered here and there, as far as the eye could reach, were clusters of tents. In one group were hundreds of awning-like structures made of black camel's hair. In another group were pyramidal tents, some white, some striped with orange or blue. In the distance these flaxen towns, with green fig orchards or dusky forests of olive for the background, gleamed like dewdrops on outspread leaves.

Deborah's cry had been evoked partly by the magnificent vision. Had Emir's big eyes detected the tents of his master in the distance?

Nadan pointed out to Deborah the various camps. The Jordan valley had become the rendezvous of the warriors of many tribes, waiting the decision of the Council of the Sheikhs for their contemplated raid upon the Maccabæans.

"The camps will not break up to-morrow, as had been planned, of that I am sure," said the guide. "There has been much division of opinion among the Sheikhs. Some distrust the Greeks more than they hate the Jews; and the news from Jerusalem that the Greeks have broken faith with those who, like yourself, have gone over to them, will destroy all zeal for helping the foreigners, as the dead water of the Sea of Salt yonder kills the bushes on the shore.

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I would rather make alliance with Judas, for every Bedouin loves a hero."

Nadan instantly repented this last sentence of his speech, for he knew that the Hellenizing sect of the Jews, to which he assumed that his companion belonged, hated the Maccabæans. He glanced at her face to meet her displeasure with apology. But no frown was there. She even put her hand on Nadan's shoulder as he stood by her saddle. He thought he detected in her look a tender passion astir for himself; for was he not a hero too?

"It is true that Judas is a wonderful warrior," said she. "And some claim more for him than skill and bravery. His people deem him inspired. Even in Jerusalem are those who avow that his victories at the Wady and Bethhoron were given him by Heaven. But what think you, Nadan? Is not all genius to plan great deeds, and all heroism to execute them, the gift of Heaven? I sometimes fear lest, except among those Maccabæans, and your own tribesmen, the world has forgotten how to be great. Oh, to be a man, Nadan, and to wear armor, and to ride a steed like Emir! It seems to me that I would fight always in company with the bravest and best, and call them the favored of Heaven, whatever creed or kingdom they belonged to. But it must be wrong to talk so."

The young man was intoxicated with his companion's spirit. He cried enthusiastically:

"Wert thou a man! Ah, there were a chieftain I would follow!"

Then catching his reward from her smile, his gallantry became two-fold, as he added, "And I could swear allegiance to the daughter of Elkiah, even if she were not a man."

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"You are my protector," said Deborah, with dignified rebuke in her tones. "Let us hasten on, I beg you."

Nadan led the way. It was exceedingly rough. They soon looked down into the awful gorge of the lower Kedron, a gash hundreds of feet in depth, as if some Titanic foe had endeavored to strike the world to the heart. The eye could not detect room for the path of a goat along its precipitous sides. One might have said that an eagle would grow dizzy in flying across the mighty chasm. But Nadan led the way rapidly, followed by the sure feet of Emir. The beast, as if mindful of the need of his burden, picked his steps not only in the safest but the easiest places. Down, down they went, from ledge to ledge, through narrow crevices, now knee-deep in the sandy débris lodged in seams of rock, and now with sliding hoofs over brief declivities. At the very bottom of the chasm they crossed the fretting waters of the brook; then climbed the steep wall of rock beyond.

When they reached the top another magnificent view burst upon them. They were just above the Sea of Salt, its blue surface gleaming amid the white saline shores like a turquoise set in a circlet of silver. Down, down again they went, until, two hours later, they struck the level roadway along the very edge of this vast bituminous pool. The sun was past meridian, and soon the bold headlands of the mountains of Engedi to the west would shut out the light. On Deborah's insistence Nadan mounted behind her; and giving Emir the rein they sped rapidly southward. The glowing Sea of Death on the one hand, and the terrible cliffs on the other, would have

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suppressed desire of conversation even if Deborah had not been preoccupied with her own thoughts.

Dusk had already thickened the air about them, leaving only the bright glow of fading daylight to banner the mighty parapets of Moab across the sea, when there arose by their side the tall pinnacle of Masada—a single monolith penetrating the sky hundreds of cubits above them. Its base was an immense scarp ascended only by a narrow foot-path. Here Emir was tethered, and sent his whinnying salutation echoing among the rocks. Deborah needed the strong hand of Nadan as they threaded their way upward.

Near the summit the whole peak seemed cut off from access. A fringe of jagged peaks stood about the central cone, like the tents of a body-guard protecting the pavilion of a militant monarch. Within these natural towers the ground fell into a deep moat. This was crossed by a narrow neck of higher ground, an artificial viaduct admitting passage only in single file, and flanked by deep and perilous declivities.

The travellers were fairly upon this natural bridge when a score of forms rose behind them to dispute their return, and as many more challenged their advance. Ben Aaron lived in troublous times, and, as a Jew among Moabite and Arabian tribes, held his stronghold like an eagle's eyrie amid hostile beaks.

To the challenge the young Arab answered with his name. A moment later appeared a tall man, slightly bent with years. His restless gray eyes suggested one who succeeded rather by caution than by courage. He passed through the guard on the castle side of the causeway, and, making deep salaam, kissed the Arab upon both cheeks.

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"The Lord be with thee, Nadan, son of Yusef! What good intent has led you to climb so high? There are no eggs in this nest for you to rob; and if Ben Aaron had a brood of his own begetting they would cackle their welcome to the boldest rider and handsomest Sheikh of the plain. That Nadan knows full well. Peace be with thee! But who have you here? Some distressed soul of my people, I see from her face. Yusef has a hard hand, but it is soft and tender betimes. That I have often proved."

"I have brought to your protection this kinswoman, the daughter of Elkiah of Jerusalem. My father bids me deliver her to your hands, in token of the peace that shall ever be between us," replied the young Sheikh.

"Elkiah's daughter? Deborah? Child of Miriam who was the child of Leah, our mother's sister?"

"I am Miriam's child," said the fugitive.

"I see it. I see it," replied Ben Aaron, pressing the black locks back from her face. "And but that Elkiah was richer than I, thou mightest have been my daughter; and such thou shalt be now, for I see there is need. Come, Nadan, you must break bread with me."

"My father's command is that I do not loiter," replied the Arab. "Night is shutting in the way, and I must be upon the high-road quickly, or even my Emir's eyes will not find it."

"Then the Lord go with thee! And Jotham and Joshua shall see you safely down to the seashore."

"It is not necessary."

"True, not for thee, but for Ben Aaron's hospitality. My love to the noble Yusef! and my thanks

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for this new mark of his goodness in giving me my kinswoman."

The two men salaamed to the ground. Nadan lifted the hand of Deborah to his lips. He looked into her face as if he would have its fair features stamped upon his soul, as a seal makes its impression on wax.

Her returning glance, and the warmth of her gratitude, though expressed in briefest sentence, "I thank you, good Nadan," sent him away with something else than a warrior's pride in his heart.

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XXXIII

WITH BEN AARON

S the form of Nadan was lost behind the battlement of rocks, Ben Aaron turned to Deborah.

"My child, why this coarse and torn garb? I did not ask in the presence of the Arab, lest the story might shame the good name of the house of Elkiah. But come within, and tell me in the confidence of our kinship; and as the Lord liveth, if man hath harmed thee, I will plant my spear before his tent ere the sun set again, though he were Sheikh Yusef himself. But you are faint, my daughter. You must rest; and, when refreshed with the warm goat's milk and the meat, I must have the tale of the happenings, even as if my ears were those of Elkiah himself—the Lord rest his spirit!"

"Adah! Zillah!"

He clapped his hands, and serving-women came from the low doorway of what was called the Castle of Masada, but seemed to Deborah more like a covert for cattle, so rude was the structure.

"Adah will bring water; and Zillah fetch you the garments of wool; aye, and the leben will bring warmth to your cheek."

Deborah evinced a moment's indecision. Her wearied flesh clamored for the offered cheer, yet her strong purpose prevailed.

"My thanks, Ben Aaron, but I have come upon a mission that may not be delayed even by your hos-

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pitality. As the good servant of our father Abraham at the house of Laban, so I must say to you, my father's kinsman, 'I will not eat until I have told mine errand.' And this raiment and these bleeding feet are fitting to my story. If I find not favor for my cause, then let me depart. You know that my father's house has sided with the Greeks."

"And well; for why should they perish?" interrupted her host.

"Say not so. The Greeks have turned to be enemies of our people. I myself was a prisoner in my father's house, doomed to death. I fled to the wilderness, to the Arabs, until these, our ancient enemies, less cruel than the Greeks, have brought me here to you. There is no hope for our people in this alliance with those who destroy our altars. God has brought to confusion and shame and destruction those of us who have consented to worship their false gods. He saves only His true people. Our hope is in the sons of Mattathias."

Ben Aaron raised his hand in protest.

"Nay," continued the eager woman, "hear me. The sons of Mattathias are the arrows of our God. Already He has sped them with His strength. If the arch of the sky were His bow and the lightning His arrows, the Greeks had not been smitten more disastrously. Without human aid Judas has already overthrown two armies of the heathen. I know that he will soon meet a third. If then Judas be beaten, the Greeks swear by their gods that no Jew, whatever may have been his alliance with Antiochus, shall live in the land. This fortress, as you know, is not safe even from the arrows and swords of the valley Sheikhs; how can it withstand

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the engines of war with which the Greeks batter down walls and towers? But if Judas be again victorious, then the Romans will send armies to his assistance. Of this he already has assurance. The blood of Aaron and Elkiah is that of the sons of Mattathias."

"This is strange tidings," said Ben Aaron. "Come within the lamp-light that I may see if fright has not robbed you of your wits, my daughter."

Deborah stood beneath the rays under the rude portal. Ben Aaron caught the vision of her superb face, as she said:

"Think you that fright drove me through the wilderness of the Kedron and Engedi, when I might have fled to the camp of Judas? I have come, my kinsman, because our faith, our blood, is one. My father, Elkiah, said that Ben Aaron would protect his children."

"And so he will! And so he will!" cried Ben Aaron vehemently.

"It is impossible that I abide here," continued Deborah. "This stronghold is itself doomed. The Arabs of the valley are already gathering like eagles waiting for a carcass. I myself heard Yusef mutter curses on the name of Ben Aaron, and that, too, in the ears of his son Nadan. Did not Nadan but now refuse to break bread with you? Why should he break bread with you when to-morrow his tribe may feast here at will, and no Ben Aaron be living to bid them either welcome or begone? What means the gathering of all the tribes in the great plain? Their tents gleam from Jericho to Galilee almost as continuously as the sacred river itself. Will Ben Aaron submit?"

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The man stood rigid, his hands clenched, his eyes drinking her spirit as he watched her and heard her heroic appeal.

"I have ten score men," said he, as if speaking to himself. "Bethuel, too, has bidden me beware the tribesmen. Bethuel is my Captain; a braver or wiser man never threw spear. I would have speech with him. You will tell me more, my daughter, as we are at meat."

"But tell me first," she insisted, "has my errand found favor with you? If not, I will go alone to the Maccabæans."

"I cannot answer you nay, my daughter. But you shall tell it all to Bethuel. Is it not enough for the moment that Deborah has found favor with her kinsman, and that his life shall be for hers whether she go or stay? Aye, you have Miriam's face. Know you, my child, that when you were born your father pledged me that you should become the bride of my Josiah, whom the Lord so soon after took from me. Since the same plague struck down the lad and his mother, Ben Aaron has lived a lonely life, overlooking this Sea of Death, for so it seemed fitting for one with a desolate heart, and no wife nor child to cheer it. The Lord has sent you to me, my child. No other angel have I seen on this barren peak. Let Bethuel say why I should not go with you."

If care and kindly purpose could have recuperated the strength of the traveller, the hands of Adah and Zillah would have taken away all aches. But ablution in the water cooled by filtering through the coarse clay jars, and the savory supper, only allayed her excitement. As she began to rest she for the

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first time began to realize how utterly wearied she was. She begged Ben Aaron that she might sleep until the morning; in the meantime he and Bethuel should consider the answer he was to give.

The news Deborah had brought spread like fire in the brambles throughout the little colony, for such it was rather than a single household. Scores of herdsmen that night gathered in the great central chamber. This was built of unhewn and unmortared stones, the débris of the storm-shattered crags about the summit of Masada.

It was the supper hour. Great pots steamed with the parched corn boiling in milk. Two whole goats, only the entrails having been removed, were being roasted on great wooden spits over the fire in the centre of the room. The savor of their flesh, mingled with the smoke, poured through the opening in the roof. This was an incense pleasing, if not to the gods, surely to the thousands of rooks collected upon the dried mud interlaced with sticks which made the roof.

Around the great chamber were sheds, from which came the lowing of cattle and the cries of the milkers. Without could be heard the clattering of wooden shoes on the rocks as the herdsmen clambered up from a lower plateau where the sheep were folded for the night.

Bethuel was closeted with his master in an adjacent room. The noise of the feasters ceased until each one threw himself down in his blanket upon the earthen floor. Then the voices of Ben Aaron and his chief broke the stillness. The debate had evidently been serious, for Bethuel exclaimed:

"It is the hour I have warned my lord must come

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Our flocks are constantly stolen. Our herders are assaulted except as they go in bands. The tribesmen no longer keep faith with us. The Greeks—have I not often said it?—could not protect us if they would. The daughter of Elkiah has come to us as the angel to the threshing-floor of Gideon. We need no miracle of the dew on the fleece, and no fire to burst from the rock, to tell us the will of the Lord. Our God is with Judas and his brethren. The maiden's voice is His call from afar."

"Bethuel was always over-ready to fight," replied Ben Aaron.

"And," retorted Bethuel, "Ben Aaron has too long been, as the Arabs are everywhere saying, like a sick eagle on his nest. What is all the gold my lord has stored between these walls? My master's wealth and fame are like yonder nail that has rusted in the wall, and will scarcely hold the weight of his armor."

"It is true. It is true. Bethuel, my grief has aged me. I am but a rusted nail. But the words of Bethuel and my kinswoman have touched me with youth again. Bethuel, we will fight. Do you remember, my son, how we used to fight? How we won these heights for our castle? How many years have gone? Summon my people, Bethuel. It were better to fall in war than to die here. Summon the people, Bethuel!"

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XXXIV

QUICK LOVE: QUICK HATE!

IT was the fifth day since Deborah's disappearance. No tidings had come to make even a rift in the cloud on Judas' brow. Toward noon scouts, who had been sent to the Jordan to discover any possible trace of kidnapping by the tribesmen, returned with the reports that the camps, which had rapidly formed in the valley, had as suddenly broken up, the Sheikhs retiring east or north to their separate pasture lands.

"The Lord be praised!" said Judas. "It can only have been by the interposition of an angel; for Yusef the Arabian, I know, had sworn to assail us, and for this and this only the tribes were gathered. Let us hope for the maiden."

"How does this portend her safety?" asked Simon. "If the tribesmen have gone, may they not have taken her with them or slain her?"

"True," replied Judas, "but if the Lord will that we shall be delivered from their menace, then He has not deserted our cause, as I confess my sins made me fear; and why should He spare us, and allow harm to come to the maiden?"

Simon mused anxiously a moment before he answered:

"Does Judas love the daughter of Elkiah? Has the sentiment of swains turned her skirts into those of an angel? Beware, my brother. Every man has his

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vulnerable spot. It is not timely for our Samson to be shorn of his locks."

Judas' face blazed with rage. His lips were clenched as if their resolute keeper could with difficulty bar the egress of lawless words. But slowly the color faded from his countenance. He turned away, addressing only himself:

"She will come yet!"

Scarcely had he spoken when, over the shoulder of the hill of Gibeah, appeared the familiar outline of the Bedouin steed and the thread-like lance. But from the uplifted point floated the pennant denoting the peaceful intent of the comer, who rode leisurely on. Judas himself went to meet him.

"Peace be to you!"

"Peace!"

The rider dismounted, and, planting his lance, bowed low to the ground.

"I am Nadan, son of Yusef. My father bids me say, 'Let there be peace between him and the son of Mattathias."

"Let there be peace!" responded Judas.

He picked from the ground a round stone, broke it in twain upon a rock, and gave the half to Nadan.

"Nay, let me give better pledge of our covenant," said the young man. "The highway from Jericho is this hour filled with the herds of Ben Aaron of Masada, and ten score men are coming to you."

"The road is dangerous for so few," interjected Judas.

"Not so," replied Nadan, "since this——"

He held in his hand a piece of stone not dissimilar to that Judas had given him.

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"Ben Aaron holds the other half. Is it enough?"

Judas' face revealed an instant of incredulity; but the eager frankness of the young man dispelled it.

"It is enough," he replied. "When Masada falls of its own weight into the sea then the covenant of the son of Yusef may be broken."

"My thanks," said Nadan, "and since I have found some favor, I would ask for more."

"You have but to speak it."

"Son of Mattathias, the house of Elkiah in Jerusalem is in alliance with the Greeks."

"It is true."

"That may be broken."

"How?"

"Elkiah's daughter is fair, and she pleases me," said Nadan, a blush blending finely with his proud mien.

"You have seen her?"

"She has been in my power."

"Where is she?"

Had not Nadan's eyes been upon the ground he would have detected something in Judas which would have halted his proposal; but he continued:

"She has been in my power. I could have carried her to my tent, yet I delivered her to her kinsman. She comes with his men."

A sunburst could not have changed Judas' aspect more than did the glad news. Nadan quite naturally misinterpreted it as an evidence of the favor with which the Maccabæan received his proposal, and he enthusiastically pursued his scheme.

"I could have taken her to my tent, for she was mine. But, son of Mattathias, I have wider thoughts for us both. With the tribesmen as your

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allies you can hold this land. Quickly the city will fall. Two thousand spears will follow the call of Yusef or his son. These you may have if you give me the daughter of Elkiah to wife, and assure me of the property of that house as her dowry."

"The woman is not mine to give," said Judas.

"Then the easier it is to give her," was the Arab's response. "When she was in my power I could have made the alliance of the tribesmen with the Greek on the same condition, for they have offered us ten times the amount of Elkiah's estate for our aid against you. Why did we not accept it? Because, son of Mattathias, the tribesmen prefer to live in fellowship with the Jews, for a thousand years our neighbors in the land, bound to us by the ties of intermarriage since the Moabite Ruth wedded the ancestor of your great King David. The Greeks are foreign to us. To make my marriage with this fair woman the seal of perpetual peace with the Jews by helping them reconquer this land, for this I gave up the daughter of Elkiah as my spoil that I might have her as a gift from your hands. I have already the consent of her kinsman, Ben Aaron, waiting only upon that of the son of Mattathias."

Nadan awaited Judas' answer with bowed head, an attitude of obsequious courtesy, which, however, did not conceal the hauteur of the man, or his reserved purpose of swift and vengeful retaliation if his scheme were not acceded to.

Judas pondered, and after some moments replied slowly:

"Son of Yusef, the tribesmen have been of old both the foes and friends of my people. I would make them only friends, that in peace we might both con-

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tinue to possess these lands our God gave to our fathers. You have my pledge—if—if the woman shall consent."

"Of that I have no fear," replied the young man, grasping Judas' hand. "Within a week I will return, a hundred of my young men with me, to escort the fairest of women to the wedding tent by the bank of the Jordan. And then, son of Mattathias, I will come again with thousands of our bravest; aye, all the Moab and the north men from as far as Bosrah and Bashan will come at the call of Yusef and Nadan."

The rhapsodic speech of the young Sheikh was broken by the clatter of a crutch and an outcry:

"They're coming! The men of Masada, and Deborah—Deborah's with them!"

Over the hill appeared the head of an advancing company of men.

The Jews ran in crowds to meet them.

Ben Aaron was received with wild ovation. Every man in his following was greeted with huzza and embrace.

For Deborah the reception was as reverent as it was joyous. The little mule upon which she was seated could hardly keep his feet as the multitude thronged about her, seeking her hand, patting the beast, and gazing with tearful eyes upon the woman whom they had learned almost to worship as an impersonation of their nation's cause.

Nadan stood far aside, perplexed by this scene. "This woman," he said to himself, "cannot be the person she claimed to be. No Elkiah's daughter, no fugitive from Jerusalem is she. A spy of the Maccabæans! I see it all."

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When Deborah recognized him, her manner was so warmly and frankly grateful to her protector that the Arab became bewildered, and reversed his thoughts. He deemed it impossible that one so fair, with those eyes lustrous with sincerity, could be aught else than what she said. Who? What was she?

Nadan's indecision was ended quickly when Judas saluted her. While the champion observed due formality, he was also as familiar as her father or a lover might have been in the presence of others. Nadan's own sense of enchantment by her beauty made him keen to detect what he thought to be the same feeling in Judas.

"Well did the wily Jew leave the choice to the woman herself, for he knew her decision," Nadan thought almost aloud. "Why did I not test the success of my errand by casting some gift into the spring of Dûk? The sacred dragon of the waters would have drifted it away, and thus I should have known of the deceit."

The Arab leaped upon his horse. With almost the celerity of a whirling simitar he turned Emir about in a circle. Rising in his stirrups, he twirled the spear around his head, and hurled it.

"Death to the Maccabæan!"

The weapon sped like a gleam of light to the spot where Deborah and Judas stood together. Before the crowd were fully aware of his movement the Arab had dashed through them, and was in flight. A single arrow close to his head sang its reply to his taunt.

Judas had seen the launching of Nadan's spear, and thrust Deborah behind him. He fended the

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missile by instantly bending, and with his arm diverted its direction. The spear glanced upward from his cuirass, and, curving like a swallow in the air, fell with broken shaft amid the rocks a hundred cubits beyond.

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XXXV

WORSHIP BEFORE BATTLE

EBORAH'S story of her adventure, of the diversion of the tribesmen from their purpose of attacking Judas, and the strengthening of the Maccabæans by the addition of the men of Masada, would have filled the remainder of the day and night with interest, without the other and more startling news that was brought them. Scouts came in with the report that General Gorgias had made forced marches through Galilee, and was already upon the plain of Esdraelon, so often the battle-field in the history of Israel's resistance to northern nations. A day's march would bring the Greek armies as far south as Emmaus, nearly west of the Maccabæan encampment.

The imminence of another battle now filled Judas with a strange gladness. He was possessed by a presentiment of victory. Others could not understand the change that had taken place in him, but all caught his spirit. He was called the "Heart of Israel," and as the quickness or sluggishness of the natural heart is registered in every nerve, even to the extremities of the body, so the great leader seemed to impart his own personality to every soldier.

To those immediately about him he thus accounted for his confidence:

"God is surely with us. Nothing less than a

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miracle could have preserved the life of the maiden and scattered the tribesmen; for well I knew the preparations they had made to strike us."

"But will they not reassemble at Nadan's call?" asked Jonathan.

"Not in time to harm us in the coming battle. See how the Lord will turn the skill of man to his discomfiture. General Gorgias is a fast fighter. He is famed for the rapidity with which he hurls his armies. He will not loiter in the plain. If I mistake not his tactics, he will essay to strike our camps even before he has made his own. If he were an Apollonius or a Seron it might be days before he would hazard a battle, in which event the tribesmen could have time to gather. But Gorgias will be too quick for them to help him. But here is the maiden."

"Have you heard from Micah of Hebron?" asked Deborah. "I brake bread with him some weeks ago, when I was supposed to be nursing my convenient malady under the care of Huldah."

"Yes," replied Judas, "four score of his men reached us yester nightfall. They are the best archers in the south country."

"And the men from Kirjath-jearim?"

"They, too, have joined us. They will fight on familiar ground, for Gorgias will certainly take the broad ascent from the plain, and not repeat Seron's mistake on the high-road."

"The physician Samuel," added Deborah, "has also done us some service. His fame called him as far north as the Waters of Meron, and he saw most of the herdsmen between here and there."

"And some of them have joined us," replied Judas,

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"but I do not trust them as I do those of the southern country. They have not felt the King's cruelty as others have. They are, however, of splendid spirit. I have assigned them some desperate work, for in a man naturally brave nothing breeds loyalty like danger."

At that moment one came hastily reporting that a change was being made in the disposition of the Greek forces. Judas held a brief conversation with the scout. Turning, he said:

"Gorgias will undoubtedly climb the ascent to-night. I must away. One thing I ask of you, Deborah."

"Your wish is your command to me, Judas."

"You must not linger near this battle."

"I am not afraid."

"Would God that you were afraid, Deborah; that in this one respect you were like other women."

"Would you esteem me more, Judas, if I were like other women?"

"Deborah, if you were like other women, like any other woman in the world, the world would be less to me. No, be your own self; only do not remain here. If harm should come to you, I should lose heart. You cheer me. You inspire me. Take no risk."

"But have I not cared for myself at other times?"

"True: yet the battle to-morrow will not be as the others. Gorgias is experienced, the most tactful, the most desperate of all the Greek generals. He will not stand on the defensive, but make his own battle. If in the night he should get his forces to the ridge, the fight will be here, or between this and Jerusalem. If he should be worsted, he will be succored by two other armies as great as his

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own. Promise me that you will not even see this battle, for I know too well that if you so much as look you will be drawn into some danger."

"For your sake, Judas, I will be as other women. The Lord gird you with His strength for the morrow!"

"Your prayer is a prophecy. It gives me strength already. Farewell!"

Deborah sat with little Caleb's hand in hers. The sun was going down. The red orb hung over the Great Sea, transforming the watery horizon into a glorious carpet fitting the feet of the King of Day, and making the sky his canopy of gold.

"Where are we now, sister?" asked the lad. "I hear a rustling as if the trees were moving together."

"Not trees, brother, but men are gathering. By the side of us is Mizpah, where, in the time of the prophet Samuel, the whole nation came together. I would that your eyes were open to see."

"But your eyes are mine, sister. What shall I look at?"

"Well, stand so. Now we see toward the sunrise the far-away mountains of Gilead and Moab. How beautiful! The great wall of rock rises into the sky. It flashes with color, almost like the floor of heaven which Moses and the seventy elders saw. Now turn —you are facing the north."

"Aye, I see old Hermon with his helmet of snow, and the cloud plumes floating from the top of it," cried the lad, as if his eyes had really opened.

"Now turn again—you are looking south. Here, almost at our feet, lies Jerusalem. Yet it was a long way to come, wasn't it?"

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"Not when Jonathan carried me, and I was asleep," laughed Caleb.

"Yes," replied Deborah, "the white roads and the black stones in the fields, the gray of olive and the green of fig-trees between here and the city walls, look like a dream floating between two waking moments. And beyond the city is Bethlehem. And now turn this way—the way the sun is going. Down there we can see Lydda, as a pearl on a gray robe; and way off is Joppa, a dot on the shore of the Great Sea which looks like a blazing serpent with his back in the sky. Here is the plain of Sharon filled again with soldiers under the great generals Gorgias and Ptolemy and Nicanor. We can see the smoke, for they are making their camps. And we are on the side of Mount Mizpah, where once the Holy Tabernacle stood before Solomon built the Temple. And look, child; everywhere the brave men of Israel are coming—for Judas has bidden the people with him to spend the rest of the day in prayer. Listen! Quite near us is a company of soldiers. They have laid down their spears and bows and swords, and have covered their heads with dust. They are repeating together the Psalms of Penitence, and praying God not to visit the sins of Israel upon the land. Let us go nearer. They are now spreading on the ground the copy of the Books of the Law, that which Dion brought me one day, and which he found in the High Priest's house; the one in letters of silver and gold once encased in the beautiful ark with clasps of precious stone, but now with its holiest words cut out, and the margins covered over with pictures of heathen gods. Now the men are praying that the land may be

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restored to Israel; and they vow—every man—to keep all the precepts of the Law as our fathers did.

"Now what are they doing? They are holding up toward heaven some garments which belonged to the priests whom the Greeks have murdered."

"I can hear their words!" said the boy. "It is 'Lord, so perish the priests of the heathen!' How wild their cry is! Is any one coming to attack them?"

"No, my child. Their voices are harsh, being tuned for battle-cries on the morrow."

"But, listen, sister, some one is reading in a mocking voice."

"That," replied Deborah, "is a proclamation of the King which is posted on the gates of Antioch, a copy of which has found its way into our camp."

A soldier read:

"SCHEDULE FOR SALE OF CAPTIVES.

One able-bodied Jew	2 shekels.
One male child (sound)	3 "
One woman (married)	2 "
One woman (virgin)	4 "

"Purchasers guaranteed protection while returning to Antioch, Tyre, Sidon, Berytus, Damascus, and to the mines within the King's domain.

"By order of the King.

"GORGIAS, Commandant."

"But now they have changed," said Caleb. "Now they are wailing."

"Yes, Simon, son of Mattathias, has piled together all the tithes of fruits, which the men have brought, and they are begging the Lord with tears to accept them, though they have no altar on which to put the offering."

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"I hear the words they are saying," said Caleb. "'Lord, Lord, what shall we do with these things since the heathen have broken down thine altars?' Shall we go and pray with them, sister?"

"Let us pray here," said Deborah.

Long time they bowed to the earth, the lad kneeling by her side, his arm thrown about her, and the blind eyes flashing with his imagination of armies and victories.

"Come, let us go!" said Deborah, rising.

"Where shall we go?"

"To Jerusalem."

"Why, sister! Not again to the city. Dion is gone, and our brother Benjamin too, and only Greek soldiers are waiting to kill you."

"Yes, child, to the city, to our father's house. I believe—Lord help my faith!—that on the morrow Israel will triumph, and we will welcome Judas the Deliverer, perhaps as the Messiah—for such he seems to me. But if we triumph not, there will be no need to flee elsewhere. The sons of Mattathias will first perish in the battle, and all the hosts of Israel with them; and we will perish too. But let it be in our father's house. Yet whether we live or die I owe it to our friend, the good Dion, to go back to Jerusalem. He is in peril for our sakes. The Greeks may slay him for letting me go. But if I show them that I have not escaped, Dion may be saved."

"Then let us go to Jerusalem," said Caleb, grasping his sister's hand. "Let us go."

They went a little way in silence except for the murmur of the multitude at worship, which at length died away in the distance. They sat down to rest amid the gray stones of the hillside.

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"Hark!" said the lad, "that's Meph!"

"I hear nothing," replied Deborah. Caleb put his fingers to his mouth, and imitated the three notes of the quail.

"He hears. He is answering. There he has stumbled and dropped his crutch. He's up again now."

"I hear nothing," repeated Deborah; but in another moment a sun-faded mat of hair was projected from over an adjacent rock.

"I thought that would bring you," shouted the lame boy, "that is, if you were anywhere on the outside of your stone cage—that's what I call Jerusalem. I have been whistling for an hour, like a bird left behind when the flock has flown southward, and I couldn't call up a mate. But my! it's good to see you, Caleb, and to-morrow Judas is going to whack the Greeks again. He knows how to fight. Did you ever see—of course you didn't, but I did—a little red ant fight a big black ant? Before black ant can turn, red ant rushes at him and bites him in two in the middle where his back is as thin as his legs; then he falls to and eats up the pieces. That's the way Judas fights. You'll see to-morrow or next day; for the Greeks are coming, sure; and Judas is lying for them, just as he did at Bethhoron."

So Meph's tongue and his crutch rattled on for an hour.

Nearing the city, Deborah and Caleb concealed themselves behind the rocks, or wandered, as the women and children do picking dried brambles for kindling. Meph in the meanwhile acted as a scout, and gave warning of every moving shadow in the distance. Only once did he sound any real alarm.

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It was when several horsemen dashed from the direction of Emmaus, and made for the west gate of the city. After a while our wayfarers cautiously approached the northwest corner of the wall, and disappeared in the crevice. Meph came out alone, and after beating the bushes wildly with his crutch hobbled off, muttering all sorts of imprecations on game that will not stand to be caught.

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XXXVI

THE TEMPTRESS

HE house of Elkiah had been measurably cleansed when Deborah emerged from the cellar and passed unobserved through the concealed stairway to her own chamber. Next day she came down into the court. A fawn could not have been more timid amid its captors than Deborah seemed as, with apparent surprise and startled look, she emerged amid a group of Greek soldiers whom Meton had left to guard the property. Equally amazed were the soldiers.

"Do not harm me. I will go back," cried Deborah, with tremulous voice.

"We'll not harm you," said an awkward man who was in command of the squad. He attempted a courtesy, which was half a military salute and half an act of gallantry such as in his peasant days he had practised upon country maidens. In executing these difficult tactics he let fall his sarissa, the iron head of which came in such perilous proximity to Deborah that it seemed to belie his words.

"We'll not harm you, lady. We have no orders about you, seeing that the General didn't know you were here."

"You will be kind to me, truly?" she begged.

"By all the gods, yes! Stand back, men!"

"I was afraid to come out of the place Captain

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Dion hid me in when the Jews took the house. I heard the men shouting, and thought they were searching for me." She trembled like a child.

"No, lady, we were not looking for you, for we supposed you had got away," replied the good-natured pikeman. "We have taken out the dead soldiers which were piled pretty thick hereabouts, and some of them stuffed into corners where they have died like rats in their holes. But it's all cleaned up now, except the smell—blood smell always lasts until the moon changes. The cracks between the pavement stones are red, but we'll have them scraped too. But it was a pity to have knocked the arm off Aphrodite. The man that did that will never win himself a wife—or the goddess has no more blood in her than her statue has. It might have been your arm, lady, if Captain Dion hadn't hid you. I'll off to the citadel and tell the General that the Captain didn't let you escape. I knew he wouldn't. Captain Dion is the bravest of the whole garrison, and Meton ought never to have ordered a better man than himself under arrest. When Governor Lysias hears of it he ought to give Dion the castle, and send Meton to command the camels and ass drivers."

Deborah went to Glaucon's apartment. As she approached she heard voices. A glance between the curtains gave a picture of the pale face of her brother, and close to it that of the Princess. She was beautiful; yes, Deborah thought, as the head of a serpent on its arching neck, with its rainbow eyes charming its victim. The Princess' right arm was about the Jew's shoulder; her left hand on his, which gripped tightly a silken bag. This Deborah

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recognized as that in which the jewels of the house of Elkiah were always kept.

"There is no other way, my dearest Glaucon, than that I propose," said Helena, half embracing him. "Menelaos is determined to have all you possess. Give me these—no, I will not ask that—but let me care for them. I can conceal them on my person. We will leave Jerusalem. In Antioch we can live together. The races, the dances, the wines, and all the pleasures of the world are there. If we tire of these things as they are in Syria, we may go to Rome, where half of what we have here will suffice for a lifetime. In Rome princes and princesses are known by their jewels and equipages, and no one searches for ancestry any more than for the pedigree of a beautiful horse."

Glaucon clutched the bag. At length he opened it.

"You may have some of them," he said. "This brooch of pearls was once worn by Arsinoë, sister of the great Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt. It came to my grandfather, who had made many loans of convenience to the house of Ptolemy, which were never paid. This cluster of diamonds belonged to the great Joseph, the tax-gatherer, whose palace of white marble is beyond Jordan. He needed a vast sum of ready money in order to buy the office of farmer of the revenues of Syria when our land was under Egypt. He outwitted a whole company of merchants from Tyre by offering single-handed more than they all together. It was my grandfather who advanced to Joseph the needed gold—which, of course, never was returned, as our possession of his jewels shows. Joseph had nothing finer than these in all his marble castle."

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One by one the gems slipped from Glaucon's fingers into those of the Princess.

"And that! Oh, how magnificent!" cried she, as he drew a necklace of scores of precious stones, and spread it into shape upon the ebony table.

"That I must never part with. It was my mother's, and now is Debor—Berenice's," said Glaucon, gripping the necklace with hesitating fingers.

"But she can never claim it, now that she has gone over to the traitors, and is herself outlawed," argued the temptress.

"Yet it is hers," replied Glaucon, his voice softening as if a tear was diffused through it. "I cannot part with it."

"Glaucon, my love!" cried the Princess, taking his face between her hands, and kissing him upon the lips.

Deborah threw aside the curtain, and stood before the frightened couple.

"You monster!" cried she.

Both started from the seat. Deborah grasped the jewels which had fallen from the fingers of the startled Princess. The woman quickly recovered her self-possession.

"The traitress! The traitress! Ho, guards!"

"The strumpet of Antioch, how dare she come into the house of Elkiah?" retorted Deborah.

"By better right, I take it, than the Jewish spy," replied Helena.

"Glaucon, command her to leave this house," cried Deborah.

The coward imitated the chameleon, which changes its color according to the object that reflects the light upon it; for, as he looked from one

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to the other of these women, he became for the moment the victim of each, and dared to decide for neither.

"If Glaucon will not purge his house of this refuse of the camp of Apollonius, then will I, that our mother's memory be not polluted. Begone!" She raised the curtain and pointed to the exit.

The Princess' dignity gave way before the indignant gaze of Deborah, as weak plants wither in the scorching rays of the sun. Still she moved not.

"Must I compel you?" Deborah exclaimed. She dexterously drew from Glaucon's side his sword, ere he could interpose, and poised it at the throat of her enemy.

"Your paramour Apollonius once quailed before the sword of the daughter of Elkiah. How shall I spare this miserable remnant of——"

The terrified woman did not wait for the completion of either the sentence or the threatened action. She ran shrieking from the chamber, and fell into the arms of—Dion.

For a moment the Captain held her; his surprise and the dimness of the passageway not being favorable to the clear vision of one who had emerged from the brilliant light of the open court. The Captain was the soul of gallantry to all of the fair sex, but the Princess and Deborah were in such utter contrast in his mind that the discovery of the unexpected personality in his arms wrought a spasmodic revulsion in his feeling. He loosened her embrace and flung her from him. This time she found a more solid anchorage for her fright—in the arms of Thersites, a Greek common soldier, who held

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also a mop with which he had been cleansing the statue of Aphrodite.

Thersites, being just then of less perturbable temper than Dion, or perhaps being more experienced in catching fleeing women, retained his captive long enough to grunt his gratitude with a kiss upon her cheek, entirely oblivious to the fact that such privileges the fair Helena had often sold as high as three shekels apiece in the market of Antioch.

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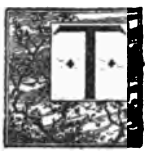
XXXVII

"IF I WERE A JEW"



HE mutual welcome of Deborah and Dion was in briefest words, for each knew more of its occasion than either cared to express; therefore the appearance of the Princess upon the scene served as a convenient diversion for both. Deborah told of the woman's attempt to beguile her brother, without intimating how she herself had come just in time to save this human moth from shrivelling his wings in the flame.

"How could she have thought to deceive you, Glaucon," said Dion, "after she had so completely unmasked her character at the dance? None but a stupid fool, or one as wicked as herself, would be tempted by her wiles after that."

The speaker did not notice that the Jew winced under his words.

"You may mistake her," replied Glaucon, as soon as he had ceased to shrink into himself, and recovered enough outward wit to say anything. "That she danced is no more against the dignity of a Princess, than it is for Antiochus to play the buffoon along the streets of Antioch, as we both saw him do in the great procession."

"Whatever she may be, she goes out of the city very soon," replied Dion. "The kinsfolk of Apollonius have heard of her claim, and have denounced her to the Governor Lycias."

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Glaucon, having gathered up the scattered jewels, wrapped them each in its linen covering, and put them into the bag; then withdrew with mutterings, which it is uncertain if they were against his mistress or her exposers.

The shell fringes of the curtain had not ceased their jangling as Glaucon passed through them before Dion cast himself at Deborah's feet.

"Tell me, Deborah, are you human, or a divinity? You are risking your life to save me from harm. Is this from a woman's misjudgment, or from a motive which only the gods can understand and give?"

"Dion," replied she, with offended mien, "rise. You shall not assume such an attitude before a girl of the Jews—a mere child, whose gratefulness you have chanced to win by your kindness."

"But why, Deborah, why this awful sacrifice you are venturing? Soon General Gorgias will be here. He is as cruel as an avalanche when his purpose moves, and he has sworn to leave not so much as a bone of a Jewish child outside the valley of Hinnom. That you are the daughter of Elkiah, chief of the Sanhedrin, is sufficient to excite his vengeance, even without the stories of your escapades as a spy, with which Menelaos' party are filling all ears. There is no hope for you here. Vanish again, I beseech you, as mysteriously as you will, for I cannot endure that you should become a sacrifice for me. I entreat it, Deborah. Go away again!"

"Why," replied she, "that would make the matter worse, my good friend. It is known, or soon will be, that I am now here; but if I disappear again it will bring new accusation against you for being in some collusion with me."

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"I care nothing for such accusation. I would willingly die in the tower with the sweet thought that you were safe from insult and danger," cried the soldier passionately.

"But, my dear Dion, I think there is need of neither of us playing tragedy. Maybe, as you say, I can vanish at will. If so, I shall always be safe, and then, when you are in danger, I can reappear, and they will say, 'Dion has guarded his prisoner faithfully!' "

Deborah became quite merry with her pleasant conceit.

Dion could not help catching some of the lighter manner of his companion. He took both her hands.

"I pray you, do not vanish quite yet. Tell me what motive led you to do this desperate deed in my behalf? You will not love me?"

He paused, gazing quizzically at her, but drew from her face not a flicker of such sentiment as certain past experience had led him to hope for.

"Then, since you do not love me, your action was prompted only by humane motives, to save a wretched Greek from some inconvenience; and for this you risk your life? I cannot understand you."

"Dion," replied Deborah, all mirth now gone from her manner, "Dion, I am a Jewess. Think not that our people's vows are only to save our land and nation. We serve these because these stand for Jehovah's law of righteousness and justice. Would it be right for me to leave you to suffer unjustly for my sake? I would be unfaithful to Jewry to so treat even a Greek. Your philosophy may teach you how to evade such questions, but our Jewish law is simple and plain. It commands us to 'do

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justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.' We need speak of no other sentiment."

Her eyelashes did quiver a little as she said this. Then, looking him fairly in the face and returning the strong grasp of his hands, she added: "If my sense of duty were not sufficiently strong, my gratitude to my noble friend and protector would prompt me so to act, and so to speak.

"Dion, we have been, though of hostile blood, too much to each other during these terrible days to doubt that we are led by the same hand of Providence. I cannot see His will. I must not prejudge it. I can only act upon each duty that I see, and as I see it. But this much is plain to me—and you will not mistake my meaning, good friend—I can have no such interests as other women may feel while my people are enslaved. To this I have vowed before my nation's God. The redemption of Israel from the hand of him whom you by your soldier's oath have vowed to serve, that fills my heart. That is my only sentiment; my only passion; but it is a passion of fire. All else must burn away before it."

"But," replied Dion, speaking very slowly, as if to hear the echo of each word from the depth of her heart before venturing another, and watching her eyes for indication, as boys watch the ripples their pebbles make when dropped into a well, "if—I—were —a—Jew it might be otherwise? You could love me if I were only a Jew? Deborah, I am a Jew in my faith—since you have taught me that faith. I am a soldier of fortune, and have sold my sword to the lord of Antioch, but I would willingly give it to your people, were it not that I foresee the hopeless-

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ness of your cause. But with your love I could die for Judaism."

"Noble Dion, these words are ill-considered. The leopard cannot change his spots, as says our Scripture; nor can a Greek become a Jew. And surely not so light a thing as a passing fancy for a Jewish girl should lead you to think to attain the impossible."

"But if—I—were a Jew?" queried he. "If you will tell me that if Dion were a Jew you could love him, that will be my happiness even as we part."

"If Dion were a Jew," replied Deborah, "he were worthy of being brother to the sons of Mattathias, and worthy the love of any woman." With which words she ran from the room.

Captain Dion stood looking at—nothing, while the sand ran half out of the glass.

"Am I a Jew or a Greek? I am surely a Jew inwardly, and," glancing into a polished steel mirror, "my nose is not, as I have often heard it said, as a good Greek's should be, perfectly straight with my forehead. By Jove! I could wish that a sabre cut might bend it more. But, Greek though I am, my sword and my wit are my own, and shall have but one duty when Gorgias takes the city—to guard this house and the woman who—would—love—me—if—I—were—a—Jew. So much is clear, clear as the Jew's law. Let me see if I can be a Jew. First 'to do justly.' Yes, it will be only downright justice to give my life for hers, since she has offered hers for mine more than once. Secondly, 'to love mercy.' Of course I do—in this case. Thirdly, 'to walk humbly with my God.' Well, if I knew who God is, I would. God of Jew or Greek teach me that! Amen!"

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XXXVIII

THE POISONER

EBORAH retired to the roof of the house. She gazed long to the west.

"Caleb, do you hear any sounds far away?"

"None, but there is a great mist rolling up from the Great Sea over Sharon, and up the mountains toward our city. Now a wind from the east rushes against the mist. I think it is a wind. Can you see a wind, sister?"

"One can see the dust it drives."

"That's it; a little cloud of dusty wind. And it drives away the mist. The mist rolls down the long hills and away—away. Now it is lost in the Sea. The dusty wind is Judas, I know."

A servant brought to Deborah a basket of fruit. Ripened pomegranates glowed ruddy beside tawny oranges in a bed of white blossoms which loaded the air with delicious spicery. Cakes of figs compressed with almonds were scattered through the tempting heap.

Caleb caught the odor; his face became a resistless appeal, which his sister answered by putting into his hand the largest of the luscious fruits.

Deborah recalled the servant to ask the donor of the fruit. Ephraim could not say, as it was brought to him by one of the Greek guards in the court who had taken it in at the gate. Deborah examined the basket, and recognized the pattern of its inwoven

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withes as one that the Princess had taught Lydia, the wife of Menelaos, and herself to make. She quickly turned to Caleb.

"Do not eat, my child."

But the child had eaten. Almost immediately he fell sick. His face became ashen pale.

Deborah carried the lad to his bed, and laid him there. The physician Samuel was sent for in eager haste; but that worthy man was beyond the city, in the labor which absorbed him day and night, as the case of no single patient could have done—the critical condition of his nation. To whom could she turn?

"Call Captain Dion," she bade Huldah.

A long time Dion watched the face and felt the hands of the child.

"I know well these signs," he said. "And good reason have I to remember them. When a lad I fell sick very much as Caleb has done. The physician of King Philip of Macedonia, at whose court I served as page, declared my illness to be due to a peculiar poison concocted by Alexandrian alchemists. For weeks I lay, while the Fates' scissors fretted my life thread. Again, when I was just a man, a similar disorder came upon me. This time I was a soldier in King Perseus' guard. But for the skill of a certain physician, Theron, an adept in the arts of the poisoner, and on that account retained in the King's household, I had certainly perished. This second secret attempt upon my life led Theron to counsel me to forsake Macedonia. This I could not do. I loved my King Perseus, and stood with him, until some four years ago he was overthrown by the Romans in that terrible fight at Pydna. But even

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in this remote region I seem to be pursued by the poisoner, for I doubt not that this which Caleb has taken was intended for myself, since it is known that I am here."

"But," said Deborah, "this basket is like the handiwork of the Princess."

"Of the Princess!" cried Dion, examining the basket. "You are right; this is such work as one finds in the bazaars at Antioch. Deborah, this was intended for neither Caleb nor me, but for yourself."

He noted more closely the fruit. "These fruits are not all such as grow in these lands. The figs and almonds thus pressed together I have seen only in the capital, and one place else—in the house of Menelaos. It is a favorite with the Priest. Deborah, I see through the damnable plot. Menelaos, to accomplish his purpose on the property of Elkiah, must leave no scion of the house alive. I swear that this is that villainous Priest's design, executed too, by a practised poisoner, and she—Heaven forbid that I make a false charge!—she is none other than the Princess. Before the sun sets I will probe the secret with my knife, though it lies at the bottom of this Priest's black heart."

"Give the child tepid water," he added. "Watch him that he does not sleep; but that I think will not be possible for some hours yet. The poison rather stimulates wakefulness until the life is burned out with its fires. I have at the Citadel some of the medicine Theron bade me always keep with me."

As Dion left the apartment a great uproar rose in the streets. Cries filled the air.

"The Jews have fled before Gorgias. They are being driven into the city."

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"The Jews are not fleeing, sister," said Caleb. "They have been pursuing. I see a mighty eagle. He has swirled above a flock of doves, but, quick as the lightning flashes, a little bird has darted upon him. He has mounted upon the eagle's back. His beak is sharper than a sword, and cuts the eagle through. The great bird falls. Surely the little bird is Judas."

Whether Caleb's vision was the vagary of his fever-heated brain, or a true prognostication from inner sight granted him in compensation for his outer blindness, one may not say, since we have not ourselves passed through the borderland of the world of sense.

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XXXIX

BATTLE OF EMMAUS

EPH'S simile of the stratagem of the little red ant which bites his antagonist into two will give our club-footed friend a place among the wisest critics of military affairs; for this was the plan of the battle of Emmaus as executed by Judas.

The Greek armies gathered near Emmaus numbered about fifty thousand men, under leaders who were rendered expert by wars in many lands. The Maccabæans had not more than one-tenth that number. This little army was further reduced by Judas' command dismissing all newly married men, and all whose ripening crops might divide their attention between peace and war, and all whose lack of zeal made them hesitate or question the wisdom of the call to battle. Not more than three thousand bowed in prayer and consecration as the sun went down on Mizpah.

When the night fell General Gorgias executed a movement which would have increased his already great fame as a strategist, had it not been countered by an exploit of deeper subtlety and boldness on the part of his antagonist.

The Greek General did not await the arrival of his full army at Emmaus, but, making there a formidable camp, well guarded by thousands of heavy-

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armed troops, he pushed on with five thousand horsemen and light-armed foot-soldiers to take the Jews unawares in their camp at Mizpah. Under the darkness of the night this advanced guard stealthily and swiftly climbed the heights. Not a solitary spot of the long crest was found sentinelled. Surely the wily Maccabæan was caught sleeping. Under order of perfect silence the Greeks glided on toward Mizpah. So rapidly did the army pass that even wild beasts were caught between the companies, and prodded to death amid the feet of the soldiers. On the assailants sped, that they might come within striking distance of the Jewish camp before daylight should reveal their approach. Thus with one swoop in the first light of morning, Gorgias, who was known as the "Hawk of Syria," would annihilate the whole brood of rebels.

At length dawn poured its ruddy lustre upon the high hill of Mizpah. Rocks and thorny shrubs, here a stunted juniper and there a pile of stone which had been a camp kitchen, stood clear in the light,—but not a Jewish tent or soldier was to be seen.

With rage and shame the outwitted Greek gave orders for retreat to his own camp twenty miles away. The chagrin of the leader became the disgust of the soldiers as they retraced their steps along the dusty road. Some, who would be wiser than others, told of the probable flight of Judas over the hills and beyond Jordan, scared by the very number of so many valiant feet which would have trampled his little host into the earth had he awaited their coming. Gorgias professed his conviction that the war was over, and that the Maccabæans had disbanded. He talked aloud of turning

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southward and resting his soldiers within the walls of Jerusalem. But, mindful that he was dealing with the strange man who had outgeneraled both Apollonius and Seron, he deemed it more prudent first to rejoin the armies of Ptolemy and Nicanor, which he assumed were gathering about his camp at Emmaus.

The day was well spent when, looking down from the great ridge that might be called the Parapet of Palestine, the Greek General saw in the distance the smoke of his own burning camp; while far away toward the fortress of Gezer in the northwest two moving dust clouds indicated the position of the Greeks pursued and of the Jews in hot chase.

Judas had discovered Gorgias' movement toward his camp at Mizpah as soon as it was begun.

With greater celerity than that of the Greek, he abandoned his own stronghold, pushed his band westward, slipped by his antagonist on a more southerly road, and, in a line as straight as that of a swarm of bees, and with as little sound in the going, made for the camp of Gorgias at Emmaus. Here was the slender waist of Meph's big ant, with Gorgias' advance for its head, and the detachments of Ptolemy and Nicanor for its legs.

The early dawn which had revealed to the Greek the unoccupied Jewish camp at Mizpah, showed to Judas a splendid canvas city near Emmaus; the open plain bossed with tents of various colors, gleaming with the polished paraphernalia of horses and the burnished armor of still sleeping men. Here were gathered, not only the stores of Gorgias' army and those awaiting the great hosts of Ptolemy and

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Nicanor, still in the rear, but bales of woollen and silken wares, boxes of jewels and bags of silver coin; for in sure expectancy of victory the Greeks had allowed to come with them a great number of merchants who were to make Jerusalem a second Damascus of trade, when it should be delivered from the menace of the Jewish insurgents.

The first intimation the Greeks in this splendid camp had of danger was the sound of the silver trumpets of the Jews, which from the ancient days of Israel had rung out the battle-call. The notes floated through the chill morning air with little more speed than Judas' men skimmed the ground in their agile assault. The Greeks fell on every hand, some with casque half on, and most having scarcely grasped sword. The mass of them precipitately fled. Judas had his men so well in hand, and such was their zeal of patriotic devotion, that no man thought of the wondrous opportunity for his own enriching, but obeyed the command, "Be not greedy of spoil, for there may still be battle betwixt us and the night." The Jews pursued the fleeing Greeks, until news that Gorgias was returning recalled them.

Judas then so quickly and skilfully placed his men about the unguarded camp at Emmaus that Gorgias, deeming such an accomplishment the work of an army many-fold that of the Jews, dared not make attack. His men became panic-stricken, and scattered in every direction, to gather only far away to the west within the lines of Ptolemy and Nicanor, and there to spread consternation by the marvellous stories with which they accounted for their defeat.

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Judas assembled his fellow-religionists amid the heaps of spoil. Before they laid hand to the reward of their valor, they acknowledged the favor of Jehovah. Then rang out the words of the old psalm, "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good. His mercy endureth forever."

Laden with the fruits of victory, the patriot army moved over the hills to their sacred city, and without challenge from the foe, gathered before the western gate.

As the soldiers deposited their burdens of spoil they took their places in groups of tens and hundreds according to the ancient arrangement of the army of Israel—the order in which they had already gone into the battle. The instant the morning rays touched the Temple walls, the silver trumpets, which yesterday had sounded the onset, gave out the time notes of the antiphonal chant of Israel, the Te Deum of victory during many ages of faith:

"Lift up your heads, ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory?

"The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory."

As the chant died away the great gate by the tower of David was swung open. In the shadow of the portal stood Deborah. She had arrayed herself in richest apparel. Her chiton was of glistening white silk and dropped to her feet. It was girdled high beneath the breasts; opening deep above, exposing a neck that needed no circlet to adorn it. From her shoulders fell a purple robe. This was matched by a purple cap that rose high from her forehead and was banded with pearls.

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Strings of these gems were pendent against her black hair, which, unclasped, fell about her shoulders.

This contrast with the remembrance of her in the cheap attire of the Fort of the Rocks, and as with bleeding feet she flitted over the stony fields on her many secret missions, wrought the patriot soldiers to the highest pitch of enthusiasm.

"The Daughter of Jerusalem! the Daughter of Jerusalem!" The shout was taken up by one company after another. It echoed from the walls and floated over the hills.

By Deborah's side was a Greek. He was in full uniform of a Captain in the King's service. Judas quickly confronted him. The contrast between the two men was extreme. The Greek was the model for an Apollo, such was his grace of pose and motion. His muscles were full, yet long, exquisitely moulded by the practice of the gymnasium and by the fencer's art. The Jew was a Hercules of gigantic stature; "badly put together," would have been the comment of a gymnasiarch; long arms, legs short, muscles knotted. The Greek was clean-shaven, his locks oiled; the Jew's head covered with reddish hair bleached by exposure. The Greek was handsome, a woman's ideal. The Jew's face, overhung by heavy brows, based in a broad, square chin, and covered with short, untrimmed beard, might have been an unpleasant one, but for the kindly brightness of his eyes, which would have won the confidence of a child.

The Greek made obeisance to the conqueror.

"Judas, son of Mattathias, I, though esteemed a heathen, have made a vow before your God, that,

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if Jehovah granted you victory in this battle, I would serve Him and you."

"I am not commissioned to receive the service of any but the men of Israel," replied Judas firmly, but with a courtesy that could awaken no resentment.

"Then know that Dion, son of General Agathocles of Macedon, forswears the service of Antioch, and vows loyalty only to the cause of the Jewish people."

Judas glanced at Deborah. "Is this the friend of the house of Elkiah? For thy sweet sake, daughter, it shall be as he wills."

He grasped the hand of Dion.

While this scene was transpiring at the western gate a very different one might have been witnessed at the south gate. The street within was packed with a motley multitude impeding one another's way in their eagerness to escape from the city. Men and women, rich and poor, young and old; some bruising the backs of their neighbors with the chests they carried upon their shoulders; others with their palanquins forcing the crowd asunder, commanding, entreating, shouting imprecations, and crying with hurts, choked the gateway.

"Way! way for the High Priest!" sounded above the din.

A giant Nubian with his gnarled arms threw the people to right and left and opened a passage for Menelaos and Lydia, whose blanched faces peered out from the purple curtains of their vehicle.

Amid this scurrying crowd, amid tattered wealth and paupers bedizened with their stolen finery, went an exquisite carriage, in which, covered with

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the robes at the feet of Clarissa, the harlot dancer and poisoner of Antioch, crouched the form of Glaucon, son of Elkiah.

Jonathan begged permission to dash upon the fugitives and make an end of them, even as his father had slain the renegade Jew at the gate of Modin.

But Judas refused. "Let them depart. Let the wound of Israel slough off its foulness; it will the sooner heal."

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XL

"A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM"

HEN the overthrow of Gorgias became known in the city, many of the soldiers of Antiochus fled even more precipitately than did the traitorous Jews. The grim towers beat upon the fugitives with shadows like the wings of an avenging spirit, which, indeed, some declared they saw descend from the sky. A few companies under Meton's closer discipline kept within the Citadel. Even that Commandant's courage had been well shaken by the previous disaster to Seron, and his nerves permanently disordered by the tragedy of the General's suicide in his presence. The new discomfiture of the more famous Gorgias—a defeat so thorough that even that great soldier's genius seemed utterly paralyzed, so that he did not attempt a retaliatory blow—completed the demoralization of Meton, so that he gave no orders for the defence of the city at large, being fully content to keep his own skin unpunctured within the walls of his castle. Judas, having no artillery for assailing the fortifications which had withstood every assault since the days of Nebuchadnezzar, was equally content to let Meton be his own jailer.

The house of Elkiah became the resting-place of the Jewish hero on the few and brief occasions when he rested anywhere. He was incessant in his watch.

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For days he would be absent with his brothers scouting the country to the eastward. He commissioned the brightest men as messengers to the tribes not yet allied with him, offering them either peace or war as their Sheikhs might elect. Envoys were sent to the Romans, to the Egyptians. He laid out extensive plans for the restoration and fortification of the city walls. In this he was aided by Dion, who had already attained a certain celebrity as an engineer among the Greeks.

For such projects there was urgent call, and for all the resources of Judas' fertile brain. Lycias, the new Governor of Syria, was collecting the remnants of Gorgias' army, compacting them with those of Nicanor and Ptolemy, and enlarging them by daily arriving contingents sent from all parts of Antiochus' kingdom. The Governor quickly marshalled a force of sixty thousand, ready to renew the war.

Even these public and threatening affairs did not entirely absorb the attention of Judas. When in Jerusalem he came daily and watched the failing life of the blind child. As the lad's body grew emaciate the blind eyes gained in lustre, the light of his soul flooding them from within, like stars bursting through a fleecy cloud. Judas would sit by the bedside of the sufferer, gazing upon the thinning and whitening face, while his own thoughts were far away among the problems of statecraft and strategy.

"Yes," he one day said to Dion, "Caleb's eyes are my oracles, as my father used to say Deborah's were to him. They are to me what I imagine the water of the deep springs is to your Greek priests. In them I sometimes seem to see the lines of coming

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battle, and the shadows of great events that heaven is preparing to bring to pass."

At times Judas would throw himself upon the bed beside his little friend, whose restlessness was calmed when he could pass his tiny, shrunken fingers over the face of the champion. Suddenly the soldier would kiss the child's hot lips, and, without a word, hasten away to the towers or the fields, as if prompted by some inspiration.

One day the lad said to Judas:

"Big brother, carry me as you used to do in the Fort of the Rocks."

"Where shall I take you, little brother?"

"Take me to the roof, that I may see the clouds with your eyes—God's banners, father used to call the clouds with their white and gold. And I would see, too, the mountains full of the chariots and horses of God; and hear the winds talk, and tell their strange stories of what is happening everywhere they go. Take me, big brother."

The lad lay in Judas' arms behind the parapet, his fingers feebly twining in the thick beard of his giant playmate. The wind came softly from the south.

"What was the wind saying to you, little brother?"

"It comes from Bethlehem, that I know; and it talks about Bethlehem."

"And what does it say about Bethlehem?"

"It says that you, Judas, were born in Bethlehem."

"How so?"

"Why, it repeated the words of the prophet, 'And thou, Bethlehem in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah, for out of thee

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shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel.'"

"Say not such things, my child," said Judas, "I was born here in Jerusalem."

"Do you remember it?" said Caleb.

"No."

"Then I think you are mistaken."

For a while they were both silent. Suddenly Caleb cried:

"Look! Look, Judas! A star!"

"There are no stars now, little brother; it is daytime."

"A star! A star! There it floats over Moab. Now it passes over Jordan. There! There! A star out of Jacob, which Balaam saw."

The thin hands were stretched out, the eyes fixed, the whole frame of the child shook with convulsion.

Judas gazed into Caleb's eyes—his fountain of divination—but the depths were covered, as when a spring is frozen over. Tears from his own eyes dropped upon the face of the child, which gave back no response. He pressed his lips against those of the lad. Was it to breathe into them his own abundant life? or to take from them the sweetness of the life that was failing? Judas had been called to ponder great problems, questions involving the fate of a nation, the solution of which he believed to be the fulfilment of prophecy and the turning of the highways of history. But here was a deeper study than statecraft or war—that of the issue of a child's life. Whither was it going? On what wings would the spirit rise as now it was disentangling itself from the frail flesh which had held it down for a little while? "What," he thought, "is love—the love

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by which this little one has held my soul close to his, calming my turbid nature, taming my ferocity, and making me think of and feel the nearness of God himself!"

A slight tremor ran through the tiny frame. Judas carried Caleb within the upper chamber, and laid him upon the couch. Then, burying his face in the pillow, this strongest of men wept with a breaking heart over a dead child.

Deborah quickly came, and Dion too; for the tidings sped. As they gazed upon the beautiful face, which seemed but the shadow of the soul that still hovered over it, Judas repeated Caleb's last words, about the star.

"It is prophecy," said Deborah. "What saith the Scripture of these words of Balaam? 'He hath said which heard the word of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open,' even as Caleb did, 'I shall see Him soon, but not now. I shall behold Him, but not nigh. There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel.' Of whom are these things said, son of Mattathias?"

"I know not, Deborah." For a long time Judas sat with his head bowed upon his hands. Neither spoke, but worshipped silently by the altar of their grief. At length Judas said: "But I know that He shall come. I too 'shall see Him, but not now. I shall behold Him, but not nigh.' Of whom the words are spoken God knows. It is enough for us that we be found faithful."

Dion stood by. He looked from the champion to the heroine as they spoke thus together. Then he,

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too, kissed the dead child, and without a word went away.

That day, as the sun was going down, a long procession wound its way through the streets, and out of the north gate to the rock-hewn tomb where lay many generations of the house of Elkiah. There they placed the body of the "little Prophet of Israel," as the people fondly called him. As they rolled the stone back in its groove, and thus covered the mouth of the sepulchre, the multitude gazed upon the giant form of their chieftain. But Judas turned away, and laying his hand upon the shoulder of Dion, as they walked together back to the city, said:

"Captain Dion, have you anything in your Greek books so beautiful as this from our prophet Esaias? He is speaking of the days of Messiah, days to come, when such peace shall fall upon the earth that the 'wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid—and a little child shall lead them.'"

"In Messiah's days?" responded Dion. "It is already fulfilled, for this little child has led us both; both you and me."

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XLI

A STRANGE VISITOR

THERE were strange visitors in Jerusalem during these days—Sheikhs from beyond the Dead Sea, with turbans as big as cartwheels, which might furnish linen, if not enough for a tent to live in, at least for one's winding-sheet when dead; chiefs from beyond the Lebanons, with silken head-housing of flaming colors, bound about the temples with ropes of wool inwoven with silver and gold threads; men wearing helms of leather, which capped closely their thick, short hair, and having short tunics bound about their loins with belts of hide from which hung heavy half swords—these last from the west, where Rome was challenging both Alexandria and Antioch for the mastery of the world. Such persons were drawn to Jerusalem by the fame of Judas; for men wondered if a new star had appeared which would change the shape of the constellation of the nations.

Very different in bearing from these warlike and courtly visitors were two persons who one day accompanied Judas on the street, going toward the house of Elkiah—a lame lad clattering on his crutch and an old man tottering on his staff.

"I found him a day's journey—for a fox—to the north—nigh on to Bethel," said Meph, his sentences broken by the slipping of his crutch from project-

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ing stones into mud-holes, of which things in about equal proportion the pavement of the streets of Jerusalem then consisted. "I treed him——"

"Treed him? Our friend doesn't look like a climbing animal," replied Judas, laughing.

"Yes, I treed him; that is, I got him under a tree. I knew that a man like him—would rest more than he would walk—and—I believe—I got my eyes on every tree big enough to cast shadow over a cony —between here and Bethel before I spied him. I thought he was dead—for he didn't hear me come, and I make as much noise—Jonathan says—as a broken-wheeled chariot. And he would have died—sure—but for some of this stuff"—producing from his jacket next the skin some fragments of black bread. "But even then he couldn't talk until I had given him—but, Judas, you won't put me under arrest if I show you something?"

"No, Meph; you are not enrolled as a soldier, so have a right to whatever you find."

"Then look at this!" said he, jerking from somewhere under his shirt a flask of bluish bronze inlaid with patterns of mother of pearl. "I found this on the crest above Emmaus. Phew! Isn't it fine? I'll wager you that General Gorgias himself dropped that. Well, I knew there was something good in it—so I just put it to the old man's mouth. My! it oiled up his tongue so that he talked faster than I can—on these stones. And he told me of sailing on the sea—and riding camels on the desert—and of beasts bigger than houses—with tails on both ends—which trampled to death whole companies of soldiers with a single step on them."

"Elephants," interjected Judas. "The old man

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has travelled far if he has seen these monsters. They say the King has sent some of them to Governor Lycias for his next fight with us."

"Whew!" whistled the boy. "Can I go and see them?"

"Maybe——"

"Well," resumed Meph, "when the liquor had dried out of his throat—the old man stopped—and I couldn't get another word out of him except 'Dion! Captain Dion!' I told him I knew a Captain Dion. Then he got up and went with me—for about a furlong when—he fell down—and so up and down—up and down—we went all day—and all night, too—for he wouldn't stop until he got here."

The old man was stumbling on with Judas' strong arm beneath his shoulder, now and then putting his hand to his ear, trying to catch what Meph was saying.

A few moments later they were within the house. The stranger was utterly exhausted, but, though unable to rise from the couch upon which they had laid him, his eyes were alert to everything. He studied the furniture as if it had memories stored in its carvings. The faces about him seemed to disappoint him, but each swing of the curtain of the chamber riveted his attention. He ate and drank a little of what Deborah brought him; then fell asleep, muttering in his dream:

"It's Dion I want. Don't take it, my child. Wait —wait; I will find you. The sea is not wide enough nor the mountains high enough—for Gideon ben Sirach is strong yet."

Though broken, his sleep was long. The sun went down, the night passed, and still he slept.

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"I fear he will not awake again," said Samuel, the physician. "The breathing is heavy, and grows shorter. His secret is his and God's."

"So let it be!" said Dion. "I don't know how it can concern me. I do not care to know any mystery that may have been over my past life, since now I have come into a clearer light. I could well wish that all the past were forgotten, and that life could begin to-day."

"So it may, friend Dion," replied the physician. "If God can forget anything, will not that make it as if it had never been? Read our Scriptures. How often the Lord says, 'I will not remember.' Where go the clouds when the north wind blows upon them? But saith the Lord, 'I will blot out as a thick cloud thy transgression.' "

"It is a good word," said Dion. "I would trust it. But see, our pilgrim stirs."

A slight tremor ran through the old man's frame.

"This is death!" whispered Samuel.

The physician's look, which had hitherto denoted only anxiety for his patient's recovery, quickly changed. It was now not less eager, but one merely of curiosity. He held the patient's wrists, and brought his face close for a study of death.

Though Samuel knew that the flight of a soul cannot be followed, he gazed intently as if to detect its direction in starting, or at least to note which fibres of flesh longest retained their grasp of a departing spirit.

But he was baffled. The sleeper suddenly threw his arms above his head, hard knit his hands, then drew in a deep breath and expelled it with a groan.

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"No! He lives! The sleep has only refreshed him!" cried Samuel.

"Has Gideon ben Sirach rested well?" he asked, bending over him.

The man gazed stupidly at the physician, then with a yawn fell asleep again.

"Well, let him rest, and when he wakes we will have his story, if it takes some of the medicine from Gorgias' flask to start it."

"Doubtless," said Dion, "his story will prove only a dream that has oozed out from some crack in his brain. We shall need one of your Josephs or Daniels to interpret it."

"If it is so obscure as that we will summon Meph," replied the physician. "That boy seems able to solve riddles with a punch of his crutch."

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XLII

A CLOSE CALL FOR DION

F the Lord give me strength to end it," said Gideon ben Sirach the day following, as he sat up on the edge of the couch, and rested his hands on the top of his staff. "If the Lord give me strength, I will tell the tale—if such you may call it—which has never yet passed my lips."

His black eyes, far sunken beneath his long and bristling brows, gleamed sharply with the effort to penetrate their partial blindness, and scan the faces of his auditors.

"As the Lord liveth! I may trust my words in your ears, Judas, son of Mattathias, whose father has a score of times taken from my hands the Passover Lamb, and slain it for the feast in my master's house. And in whom can I confide if not in the daughter of Elkiah, the just man, Nasi of our Sanhedrin in days when not even the gold of Egypt or Syria could bribe it to wrong judgment? And if this man be not Dion, page of King Philip of Macedon, and Captain in the army of his son Perseus, may my words be deafness evermore in his ears if he listens to them."

"Amen!" responded Dion. "I am your man so far."

"Aye, and let thy Amen be the anathema of an old man whose eyes in Sheol may soon look upon the face of my master, to whom and to God I go

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to render my account. My son, put thy hand beneath my thigh, and swear that thou art he."

Dion obeyed. As he did so Gideon put his hand upon the young man's brow, and pushed back the thick curling locks. He felt with his long thin fingers beneath the hair; then suddenly cried, with excitement that barely allowed distinct utterance:

"Thou art Dion, but not the Greek."

"I am Greek for as many generations as thou art Jew," replied Dion, laughing. "I swear, old man, that I am a Greek."

"The Lord forgive your oath!" replied Sirach. "But what was I saying? Had I told my tale?"

"No, good man, you had not yet begun it. We are waiting to hear it and to believe it, if it be not too incredible, for your memory seems as tangled as your tongue."

"Aye, and believe it you shall. There was once in Alexandria, in the days of Ptolemy called Euergetes —that damnable king who bade them gather all the Jews in the hippodrome that they might be trampled to death by the feet of his elephants—there was among these sons of Abraham one named Nahum, son of Nahum of Jerusalem. By a miracle from the hand of the Lord the infuriated beasts were tamed and harmed not one of our people, even as the lions in the presence of Daniel."

"We have heard the story," said Dion, impatient at the old man's prolixity.

"Nahum escaped death; but, having been a leader of our people against the tyrant, Ptolemy followed him and his children with persecution. He seized the estates, and sought to kill all his lineage. Nahum fled.

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"Sara, daughter of Nahum, was befriended by a noble Greek of Macedon, who took her as a child to his own house. She grew fairer than the flower of the lotus, her mind brilliant as the diamond, her virtue white as the pearl. By most she came to be esteemed a Greek, for her father's friend bestowed upon her all the culture of his people. But the God of Isaac and Rebecca, of Jacob and Rachel, was with her. There came to Alexandria a son of the faith, as Isaac the patriarch came to Padan Aram. My master, Shattuck, espoused this woman, Sara. She bore him a son. But upon the child's face the father never looked. Journeying to Alexandria Shattuck was lost, whether by the hand of the robbers of the desert, or through the jealousy of others, I may not say—for I am too old a man to speak the thoughts which it were well to bury with my body. The child's life was sought, I know not by whom; but this," Gideon bared his arm, across which was the scar of a wound that had well-nigh severed it near the shoulder, "this arm took part of the stroke which, but for it, would have exterminated my master's house."

Dion had been listening not only with incredulity, but with some disposition to make sport of Sirach's story. He now took the hand of the old man, and gazed upon the scar as if it were an object of religious reverence. He then pushed his fingers through his own hair in a manner that was not his habit even when deeply thinking.

"Old man," said he, "if I were the baby for whom you took that slash, I would build you a tomb as big as Absalom's down there in Siloa. That cut would have taken the top off a man's head."

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Sirach continued: "These arms carried the boy to the house of the noble Greek, always the friend of Nahum's daughter. This man suddenly disappeared from Alexandria, taking with him Sara and her child. I learned that they went into Macedonia; and that he might shield the repute of Sara he claimed her as his wife and the lad as his own son. Meanwhile I was in charge of the wealth of Shattuck my master.

"The property of my master in Alexandria was of great value. For many years—God is my witness—Gideon ben Sirach has guarded it. Not a shekel of it all has passed to others. Faithful men of our race have stood with me against those, high in the King's favor, who would have taken it. So long as the death of the child cannot be proved the estate remains. His death established, all will be alienated to the state, which in Alexandria means to those whose favor the King buys by granting them the liberty to rob whom they will.

"The child of Sara I have searched for far and wide. While the Greek lived he could not be induced to confess that he was not the lad's father. His pride and contumely for our race—no, I will not say such words—his love for the boy forbade it.

"When the noble Greek died a few years later, the child disappeared. I traced him to the court of Philip, where he was in waiting, and afterward, as he grew to be a man, to the camps of Perseus, and at last into the service of Antiochus. Wherever the armies of Syria have gone Gideon ben Sirach has followed, but with too slow a foot. When this new Antiochus—the Lord rot his bones!—poured his legions into our Holy Land, I pursued. But, as a

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Jew, I have been expelled from his camps—until now—the Lord's name be praised! My eyes behold the son of Shattuck."

Sirach reached his hands toward Dion to embrace him. The young man recoiled as if from defilement.

"Sirach is demented! Ha! ha! Dion a Jew! Dion ben Shattuck! Oho! But take no offence, friend, at my words. I have no doubt that Shattuck was more worthy of my paternity than I am of inheriting his shekels. But the whole thing is a dream of Sirach. His memory is as confused as his tracks have been while searching for his Dion. That I may have been taken for such a waif is quite possible, since I have been a homeless fellow—just the one to gather myths, as the crooked oak on Olivet draws flocks of wild pigeons to its dead boughs. But there is nothing in it. I am not your Dion, my good man, for all I like your story."

"Thou art not Dion? True, true," said Sirach, "thou art not Dion, because thou art Gershom; for so Sara, thy mother, called thee; for she said, 'He is a stranger amid a strange people,' as thy name Gershom signifies."

"Is there such a name among the Jews?" asked Dion. "I have never heard it. But what sign, Sirach, have you? I surely was never circumcised." He burst into laughter.

"Sign? Sign?" cried Sirach. "By the scar on thy forehead which my fingers felt when thou knelt, I know thee."

Dion was for the instant startled, and felt again amid his curled locks. At length he burst again into loud laughter.

"I have now the clew of Sirach's credulity. As a

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child I was known for my crown jewel, as my playmates called the scar on my head. As a page they dubbed me 'Prince' because of it, and now my cock's comb of a scar has been good Sirach's decoy. Ha! ha! I bethink me there was a fellow in Philippi, a Jew adopted by a Greek, who wore a split scalp. I got my decoration in this way. As a child I played with my father's great sword. One day it fell on me, and but for the hand of some god as helpful as the arm of Sirach to his little Gershom, I had never lived to become the hero of such a pretty tale as our friend has told. But now, Sirach, I will give you a challenge in turn—tell me the name of the good Greek who so befriended your little Gershom's grandfather, Nahum, in the hippodrome."

Sirach sat staring at Dion, as if his words had stunned him.

"Tell us the noble Greek's name, Sirach—the Greek who was Sara's father's friend."

"Yes, yes," said the old man, "Nahum's friend was Ctesiphon, Ctesiphon——"

"But I—I am the son of Agathocles," fairly shouted Dion. "I am not son of any Ctesiphon."

The old man rose. He attempted to speak, but his throat gave no utterance. His face twitched as if pulled by strings. He sank back upon the couch. His eyes followed Dion; otherwise he was motionless.

"He would tell us more," said the Greek, and bent above him, held by a strange fascination. But the lips did not move again. An intense longing came into his eyes, as if the soul would speak without need of voice.

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"It is a stroke of God," said Samuel. "He will tell us no more. I surely thought he had you, Dion, for as good a Jew as the rest of us."

"But for my father, Agathocles', memory I had not cared," replied Dion. "If my sword be Jew, why not the hand that holds it?"

"I will send my servants," said the physician, "and have Gideon removed. He is taken in dumb palsy, a disorder I would study. In my house he shall have comfort while life abides in his frame, which will not be long; although I have known such to live for many moons."

"He shall remain here," commanded Deborah. "He is a true Jew, servant to my father's friend."

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XLIII

BATTLE OF BETHZUR

LITTLE thought was given to Sirach or his story during the next few weeks. The nation was summoned to a sudden life- and-death-struggle with the Syrian Empire. Lycias, the Governor, menaced the Sacred City with sixty thousand men. Profiting by the failure of his predecessors in the three "Battles of the Passes"—the Wady on the north, the Heights of Bethhoron, and the slopes of Emmaus on the west—this cautious General passed to the south, and then swung his armies eastward to the neighborhood of Hebron. It was a masterful stroke, since from that region there were many roads which converged to a point not far from the city. Upon any one of these open ways the invaders might mass, or with their greater numbers they might advance in force by all of them. The choice of approach being with the invaders, the defender was forced to abide an attack very near the city walls, unless by strategic insight he could divine his antagonist's plan almost before he began to execute it. Judas was therefore compelled to sentinel every spot of ground from Bethshemesh on the west to Hebron on the south. His sharp-eyed peasant soldiers signalled by flying arrows in the day and fire-flashes at night the slightest change in the disposition of the Greek forces. The instant Lycias' advance turned into the open valley of Elah, and began its wary

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movement northward, the Jewish leader saw that the enemy would essay the narrow pass between the rocky slope of Bethzur and the cliff of Halhul, some twelve miles from the city. He therefore gathered his men secretly a little north of that gateway of the hills and waited. Judas was mindful that these slopes and wadies through which the Greek legions would have to approach were memorials of the valor of David, the shepherd king of Judah, in his wars against the Philistines. He bade his men bow for worship, and himself led the prayer:

"Blessed art Thou, O Saviour of Israel, who didst break the violence of the mighty by the hand of Thy servant David, and didst deliver up the camp of the stranger into the hands of Prince Jonathan. Shut up now this army of the invaders in the hands of this Thy people Israel, and let them be confounded in all their host."

Scarcely had the muttered "Amens" ceased when the clatter of horsemen was heard beyond the pass.

The Greeks were not aware of the presence of the Jews, since the latest of their scout reports placed the patriots in unsuspicious ease behind their city walls. They, therefore, moved incautiously into the narrow valley of Bethzur.

Judas silently watched until their masses and armaments were at the point where the hills gave them least freedom of movement, then his signal poured suddenly the entire patriot army upon the advancing foe. They struck the Greek column in front. When Lycias had succeeded in deploying to meet the attack from that direction, his agile assailants slipped to either side, and, scaling the hills, descended upon him as a flood makes every depression its channel.

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Everywhere the Jews had advantage of higher ground, each cubit of which was familiar to them. They knew the outlet of every pathway, as deer know their runways to water. Their captains had marked the rocks which companies of tens or threes could use as breastworks. They had gauged the distance for arrow or spear or slingstone between these natural forts and the open spaces the foe must cross, so that their aim was unerring. The Greeks, attempting to turn from the threatened impact in front, were met at disadvantage by half-concealed Maccabæans, whose deadly shots slaughtered them before they could locate the source of attack. Upon the hastily formed roofs of linked shields, the noted phalanx of the Greek, the Jews hurled great boulders, crashing through brass and bone. The air was darkened with flying missiles, which dropped like a storm of hail upon those in that open valley.

The cry "Mi-camo-ca-ba" echoed seemingly from the very sky. In their blind rage to open ways of reaching the enemy or of flight, the Greeks assailed one another, as the scorpion stings itself to death. Before nightfall the army of Lycias was shattered beneath the strokes of the Hammer of Israel.

Just previous to the battle Dion had asked permission to join in the fray. Judas replied:

"I have no orders except for my own and kindred people. The victory will be of the Lord, and that He will give only to the children of the faith." He put his hand familiarly upon Dion's arm, as he added: "Had old Gideon ben Sirach's tale ended differently, as I had hoped, I would have given you command of a thousand men."

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To this Dion responded with somewhat of resentment: "Is not your faith, Maccabæan, mine? Do you distrust my word of honor, which I gave you at the gate? I beg that you let me prove my sincerity in the sight of our two nations."

"I may give you no charge," replied Judas, "but I take it that before another sunset one who would fight for Jewry will find his own opportunity. And I pledge you, Dion, not to forget your service, though I may not direct it."

"It is enough," rejoined the Captain, as he hastened toward the battle, divining at a glance where it would be thickest.

No spot in all the bloody field was more hotly contested than a little green glade about a spring. Jew and Greek fought desperately for possession of its cooling waters. The holders of the ground at one moment were slaughtered at the next by new assailants. More than a score of times the spring alternated its owners. Its veins seemed to spurt out blood, so thickened had the water become.

At this spot toward the close of the day two men glared at each other over their sword points. One was Dion; the other wore the badge of high honor among Lycias' officers. He was faint from long exertion; but even Dion, master of sword-play though he was, could not find a spot in his antagonist's body unguarded by his quick ward. It was evident, however, that Dion would soon get from his foe's exhaustion what he could not wrest by his skill.

"Yield!" he cried.

The man slightly lowered his sword.

"That voice is not a Jew's," came from the Greek helmet.

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"The sword is," was Dion's reply.

"Yet played as never was a Jew's," came the response between wards and panting breaths. "If I am to fall, thank the gods it is by a Greek's hand, though he be a traitor to his blood!"

"Traitor!"

The taunt fired all the fiend in Dion's soul. With one stroke he sent his opponent's sword ringing among the stones, and his body backward to the ground, while a tremendous blow on his head completed his discomfiture.

The displaced helmet revealed white hair and beard. Dion did not strike again.

"I will not take the life of one of your years. So valiant an arm must have done better service than this in which it is now engaged. Rise! You are my prisoner."

"I will not be prisoner to a Jew," said the prostrate man. "But I swear by all the gods, that stroke was of no Jew's arm."

"Taunt me not again," shouted the victor, "or, by Jove! the sword, be it Jew or Greek, will find your heart."

"'By Jove!' Why, man, you have not been Jew long enough to learn new oaths. Now strike if you will. My life is yours, but first"—the man assumed an utter indifference of tone and manner—"first I would have a drink of the spring. It is hard to let out one's last breath through a throat so parched."

"That boon is well earned," said Dion, his rage tempered instantly by the man's grim humor.

He helped unclasp his antagonist's helmet, and gave his hand as he tottered over the dead bodies

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which lay in heaps about the spring, and through the mud made by the many feet that all day had trampled the ground soaked with water and blood.

"Faugh!" said the man. "I cannot drink this stuff. It is not wise to mix wines, and mixed bloods are worse. Cut my veins, my friend, and let me drink something at least clean and pure. A draught of life—good Greek life—to die by—ha! ha! Help me, ghost of Socrates!"

Dion cleared the surface of the fountain on the side where it came trickling up from the earth and mingled its white beads with the red foulness. Using his helmet for a vessel, he dipped a quantity.

"I have seen a fairer goblet at a feast," said he, offering it with a courtesy that was real for all its seeming mockery.

"Which again proves that you are a Greek," was the stranger's response.

"Why repeat that?" said Dion.

"Because," said the old man, "it is true. Would you know how I detected it?"

The two became interested in each other's faces.

"Go on," said Dion.

"Why, as I said, I knew you by your sword play. And not only are you a Greek, but I swear you are a Greek of Macedonia. Do I not know it? Never before was my sword tricked out of my hand either in play or fight. No man could have done that, had he the strength of Heracles, but in one way—and that way you learned in the school of Philippi."

"The Jews travel far. They learn what pleases them," said Dion, with suppressed amazement.

"But no Jew ever learned that guard and thrust in one movement." The stranger imitated the mo-

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tion with his hand. "It was my own invention."

"You!" gasped Dion in amazement. "You! If you take that man's name falsely, you die like a dog! Who are you?"

The officer sprang to his feet. He put his hands upon the young man's shoulder.

"Gods! Can this be?"

A swirl in the battle-tide brought others to the spring. Dion and the stranger moved away. They were closely watched by a party of Jews, some of whom were ordered to keep them under constant surveillance.

"It is that Greek," said their officer. "See, he is in communion with the enemy. Take them alive, but if they try to escape kill them both."

The two turned from the open glade to a covert among the rocks. Scarcely had they begun to converse when they were seized by overpowering numbers, who could not have more stealthily performed the exploit if they had been leaves of the overhanging trees which turned into men as they fell. The arms of the captives were quickly pinioned behind their backs, and under guard they were marched to the city.

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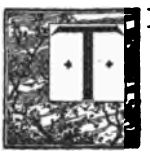
XLIV

A WIFE?



THE following day the excitement in Jerusalem was intense and clamorous. As band after band of the Jewish heroes returned from the pursuit of the Greeks they were met at the city walls with such cheers that the Kedron valley echoed as if the generations of the dead entombed along its rocky sides had awakened to greet the valor of the living. Companies vied with one another in relating the marvels of prowess they had performed; but through all the boasting ran a vein of reverent recognition of the heavenly leading of affairs, and almost as worshipful praise of the strange man by whose hand Jehovah had wrought this new deliverance.

Those who had captured Dion at the spring of Bethzur gave full credit to their own shrewdness and courage in that exploit.

"All Greeks are treacherous," was one comment. "Judas is so true himself that he suspects no one else; but he ought not to have allowed the Macedonian to remain in the city after the rest of his kind had been chased out by their own heels."

"Think of his impudence! He even asked for a command. To command us—us! Jonathan was for trusting him; but Simon, the Wise, advised caution. No doubt this Greek traitor had planned an ambush for us. The other Greek is of high rank;

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his face would show that without the gold in his sword-hilt."

"But Captain Dion fought splendidly," interjected another. "I myself saw him make five Greeks bite the dust."

"That is true," observed one, "and but for his advice at one time it might have gone hard with my company. We were wedged in between the hills, and the Greeks were about to link shields—and when they do that they will move through the gate of hell—but Captain Dion gave me the hint, and himself posted us so that we took them on the flank, and buried them under their own metal. But, as I have thought of it since, I remember that I didn't move our men exactly as Dion advised me, or we might have come out right in front of the phalanx and been trampled to pieces. It must have been a trick on the part of the traitor."

"No doubt," was the response. "The Greek has been playing us false throughout; but his toes are in the trap now."

This popular estimate of Dion was repeated in higher places.

Judas took no part, except as a listener, in the council of his brethren as they debated the matter.

Simon repeated his former warnings, which now seemed justified. Eliezar recalled several other instances in which Dion's actions might have had a sinister intent. John attributed to him some secret advice which he must have sent to Lycias, and which led the Greek General to make the assault upon Jerusalem from the south, the only direction in which Judas had looked with any fear. That plan was shrewdly laid, and but for the swiftness

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with which Judas made his counter plan, and the rapid succession of his blows upon the enemy before they got through the hills of Bethzur, the Greeks had surely taken the city.

These insinuations brought to the face of Judas no sign of his being influenced by them; but a certain word that fell from Jonathan was met by a quick flash in the champion's eyes.

"If Captain Dion proved treacherous, perhaps the daughter of Elkiah can explain it. She could have made the Greek a Jew with a breath."

Jonathan touched Simon's hand as he said this. Judas mused a moment, his face reddening as it did only under deep emotion, generally of some resentment. His response was laconic:

"The Greek shall have justice."

"Justice should not go with lagging feet," said Simon.

"Nor leap," replied the chieftain. "Only God can give judgment with lightning."

"True, but men should be quick to see a storm coming, my brother," said Simon. "Let the men be summoned at once. There may be other treasons for aught we know. We have caught but two serpents in the nest. If others are there we will start them to squirming. I will have the prisoners brought."

"Let them wait," was Judas' decision.

"Wherefore wait, my brother? We can discover who and what these men are very quickly."

"Perhaps," said Judas; "but it may take time to know ourselves."

"Going into one of his moods again," remarked Eliezar, and the brethren went away.

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The two prisoners were generally forgotten in the popular excitement of a few days immediately following the victory of Bethzur. Mountains of spoil had been brought into the city and distributed—for Judas insisted that his men should share equally the fruits of their bravery. Bethzur was fortified against the possible return of Lycias, who raged in his disgrace like a wounded tiger. Even if he should not repeat his venture, the nomadic people to the south were making hostile demonstration; indeed, all the tribesmen, south, east, and north were in commotion. Yusef, the Arab, had stirred up all tentdom to avenge the insult which Nadan had reported, and even the defeat of Lycias did not altogether discourage the purpose which the coming of that General had led them to make.

Said Yusef one day, watching a fight of insects:

"Let the Greeks bite the Maccabæans; we will come later and be the sting."

The black tents of the Bedouins were again seen on all sides, like mildew on a fair fabric. Couriers with long lances and head cloths streaming in the wind circled about Jerusalem at a safe distance, as Meph sagely remarked, "Like a lot of spiders webbing in a big bug they dare not yet attack."

These things would have sufficiently engaged the time of the Maccabæan leaders had not very different matters also claimed their attention. The far-flashing fame of Judas startled the nations. Envoys from various kingdoms came to Jerusalem to study the meaning of the new power, which seemed to rise as mysteriously as the armed men who sprang from the ground sown with the fabled dragon's teeth. The Governor of Phœnicia and Cœle-Syria

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proposed terms of alliance with Judas. Demetrius, a nephew of King Antiochus, an aspirant for the succession to the Syrian throne, now a hostage in Rome, sent secret emissaries pledging the independence of Palestine as the price of Judas' assistance in accomplishing his ambition. From Athens, on the other hand, came those who would bribe this new sword for the help of Greece against the Romans. These, again, were met on their way by the agents of Rome, who were also coming to offer rank and power to the new kingdom of Israel as a province of the great republic of the West.

Judas and his counsellors had thus to consider many wider problems than that of manœuvring an army. It was clear that Jerusalem was to become again a capital, and the scattered people a nation.

"Judas must be our King," said Jonathan.

To this all agreed, with a solitary exception. Judas indignantly replied:

"I am but as the hand of a Gideon; would you have me play the part of Abimelech? A bramble king, indeed, would you find me. I am fit only to be a scourge to the enemies of the Lord. Let me be but as a soul within a sword until the Lord sheathes me, as I know He soon will. Are we not near the time of the coming of Him who is promised as the Prince of Peace? Search the records, Simon; the books of the prophets, and the genealogies of families of Judah, for Messiah is to be a branch of David—that surely is not of the house of Mattathias."

Jonathan replied:

"The words of the Prophets are hard to interpret, my brother, while the events of Providence lie open,

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like these hills in the sunshine. Only the blind fail to see the signs of the times. Woe to the man among us who cannot recognize the trumpet call of the Lord, when every blast of it has already destroyed an army of the enemy, as the rams' horns made the walls of Jericho fall down. Least of all should Judas shut his eyes to the light because it happens to fall in front of his own feet."

When Judas was not present his brethren spoke together freely, assuming the kingship to be inevitable. They concerned themselves only with schemes for founding and strengthening the new monarchy.

"Judas must marry," said Simon. "The nation can be built upon no one man."

"Surely not upon a single man like Judas," replied Jonathan, "whose life must be in perpetual hazard of battle; for well I see that war will be our condition for many years to come. The little land of Judea is not wide enough for a kingdom. We must conquer all the ancient lands of our fathers."

"And Syria, Phœnicia, Cœle-Syria also," rejoined Simon, "until Solomon's empire, 'from the river to the end of the earth,' from the Euphrates to the Great Sea, shall have been restored. Judas must found a family to whom this work shall be committed."

"It will be possible to make alliance by marriage with one of the great powers," suggested Jonathan. "I would not despair of a princess of Egypt even."

"It were a sin to think of such a thing," replied Simon, indignantly. "Did not the Lord rebuke Solomon for his foreign wives? The men who sit upon the Maccabæan throne must be of blood as pure as

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that of Judas himself, untainted, as we know, in a thousand years. There is but one woman for Queen of Jerusalem, the daughter of Elkiah. The glory of the High Priests' house has departed. What house comes next? Is it not that of the last Nasi, Elkiah the martyr? Besides, Judas has already set his heart upon the maiden."

"She will never be the wife of Judas," said Jonathan.

"Deborah not the wife of Judas? What woman in Jewry would refuse such honor?"

"One woman."

"To utter such suspicion is treason," cried Simon, in a towering rage.

"Not to speak as one sees would be treason far worse."

"And you have seen—what?" cried both Simon and Eliezar.

"I have seen—well, I have seen a cat play with a dog, and both forget that they were made to tear each other."

"This is no matter for mirth, nor for silly parables, in which Jonathan is given to hiding his thoughts. What have you seen?"

"Well, then, I have seen a Jewess and a Greek. Ask me no more," and Jonathan turned away.

For a while neither of the remaining men spoke. At length Simon said:

"Do you believe this?"

"I have heard it on the street," replied Eliezar. "And it is said that, since the taking of that Dion in the very act of treachery, Deborah has not been beyond her house. She certainly has had no part in any public rejoicing over our great victory. Not

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a scrap of color has been hung from her parapet."

"Does Judas suspect such a thing?"

"He has not been within the house of Elkiah since the battle. And that is strange. He was always there."

"It is well," added Simon, "that the Greek must die. Whatever favor the daughter of Elkiah has shown him, the clear evidence we have of his villainy will open her eyes. But Jonathan's thought is beyond credulity. It is a trick of him they well call the Wily. Jonathan is bent upon our making alliance with the heathen, and would divert us from the course which patriotism and religion demand; aye, and that which Judas' own inclination would favor. Did you not notice his manner when Jonathan mentioned the name of the Greek in connection with Deborah? I tell you, Judas will make a quick end of this proselyte when he learns what men are saying of the traitor's friendship for the maiden."

"And I shall see to it that he hears it," replied Eliezar.

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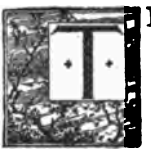
XLV

THE TRIAL



THE morning after this conversation the two prisoners were summoned. The court was held in the open portico of the gymnasium on Ophel. Captain Dion and his companion were brought there, their arms still bound. Judas had been pacing the portico, absorbed with his own thoughts.

"The prisoners, sir," said their custodian.

Judas sat down upon a fallen statue of Hermes, near it a rusted discus. Slowly he raised his head, as if loath to so much as look upon one taken in such shame as that of Captain Dion. He glanced first into the face of the older prisoner. In spite of his unkempt condition this man was imposing. His erect attitude belied his wrinkles as a token of age. The blood from an undressed wound still clotted his brow, but this could not hide the rare nobility of his features.

Judas studied the man a long time in silence. He seemed fascinated by the stranger's appearance. If what the Greek orators had on this very spot declaimed were true, that a goodly physical endowment is the outweaving of goodness of soul, Judas' decision had been an instant discharge of the prisoner.

He turned to Dion. Before his eyes rested upon the Captain, Judas forced a look of severity, knitting his features into hardness. As when a soldier puts a chain corselet over his breast, so Judas had

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evidently determined to guard his sense of strict and merciless justice against any temptation that might come from his former liking for the culprit. The muscles of his face were set like linked steel.

Captain Dion returned his judge's gaze with perfect self-possession. There was neither blush nor pallor, nor flicker of fear, nor sign of resentment.

"Take off those ropes," commanded Judas. Then, turning to a soldier:

"Your report, Captain Jacob!"

Captain Jacob related the events attending the capture, as he himself, in charge of the company that made the arrest, had witnessed them. He stated that Dion and his accomplice were caught in apparent hiding, engaged in conversation which betokened familiarity and mutual understanding. Several others confirmed Captain Jacob's evidence, and added details which deepened the color in the picture of the plotters, and, at the same time, brought out the shrewdness and courage of their captors.

The clouds massed more heavily on Judas' brow as he listened. There were moments with this strange man when, without uttering a word, his aspect became almost as terrible as when shouting his battle-cry, "Mi-camo-ca-ba!" At such times his friends would turn away, dreading the outburst when the hot lava of his soul should reach his lips.

When the testimony against the prisoner was ended, Judas remained for a long time silent. At length he spoke. The words came slowly, as if each were compelled to halt and answer the challenge of a sentinel placed before the door of his lips.

"Has Captain Dion any explanation of what is charged against him?"

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Dion's coolness matched that of his interrogator. There was neither stoical bravado nor shame in his confession:

"Maccabæus, every word these men have spoken is true."

A murmur of rage at the prisoner's audacity ran through the crowd, as they pressed close about him.

"Is not this enough?" cried Simon, putting his hand to his sword as if he himself would serve as executioner on the spot.

Judas raised his hand. The angry multitude moved back, yet every man stood ready to be the minister of Judas' vengeance the moment the signal should be given.

"Captain Dion," said the judge, "I did not ask you to either confirm or deny what these true men of Israel have said. Your confirmation would not add a feather's weight to their veracity, nor would the denial of ten thousand Greeks shake our confidence in them. I ask not your testimony, but your explanation."

"We need no explanation," muttered Eliezar.

"Let him explain when his dead lips can talk; they can't lie. But the Greek who is to be believed does not live," said another.

"Silence!" cried Judas, and his men slunk away under his indignant look, as hounds when whipped back from the prey they have caught and are waiting to tear.

Judas again addressed the prisoner:

"Captain Dion, by the gateway after Emmaus you gave me your hand in voluntary alliance. No one compelled that act. I then believed yours to be an honest hand. I will not now fling it from me

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unless you yourself shall show that it is unworthy another honest man's touch. Explain your conduct at Bethzur."

Dion advanced a step. He bowed very low.

"My thanks, Maccabæus! An honest man can ask no more than you have granted me."

He then put his arm about the shoulder of his fellow-prisoner.

"This man, Maccabæus, is my father, General Agathocles, the commander of the last phalanx of your foes to fly from the field of Bethzur. Do with us what you will."

The crowd surged in again, and stared at the noted captive. A huzza broke forth. Was it in self-gratulation that so important a foeman had fallen into their hands? Or was it elicited by the dramatic nature of the scene, as father and son thus stood defenceless except for their mutual embrace? Judas rose from his seat.

"God forbid that even in war there should be such miscarriage as that a son's hand should be raised against him who begat him."

Simon interposed, "If they be father and son, it does not disprove their treason."

"Perhaps accounts for it," said Eliezar, with a shrug.

"Silence, my brothers!" commanded Judas.

Turning to the elder prisoner, he asked:

"Are you General Agathocles? Does Dion speak truth?"

The venerable Greek stood erect, yet trembled with rage, as he replied:

"Maccabæus, never before has man questioned the truthfulness of either Agathocles or his son without

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biting the dust. Give me my sword, and let the gods decide betwixt us."

"Your pardon," instantly replied Judas. "God forbid that I should wrong one in bonds!"

The Greek as quickly rejoined, and with equal courtesy:

"Your pardon, Maccabæus! I forget that I am your prisoner, and that the question is right. Let me speak further. There has been no treason to either Jew or Greek. I was fairly taken in fight. Dion's sword, wielded in your service, conquered mine. This wound"—pointing to the bruise upon his forehead—"is the witness. But one sword, Maccabæus, could have accomplished this—not your own, though so famed for its skill and weight. Only the arm that Agathocles has trained could get the better of Agathocles himself—if it be not bombast for an old man to say such things. I was first my own Dion's captive before I became yours. Treat me as any other whom your men have taken. War asks no mercy. Do with me as you will. And for Dion, I ask only your justice, Maccabæan."

"Both shall have justice," replied Judas. "But what is justice? God is just, and we—we are only men."

He sat down again upon the broken statue of Hermes, and with his sword-point drew lines upon the ground.

"In one of his moods again," whispered Simon.

But the spell was quickly off. He stood up. His sword trembled in his hand from the nervous tension with which he grasped it.

"General Agathocles, you are my prisoner. I must maintain discipline."

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"That is just and wise, if an old man of many wars may counsel a younger one. Maintain discipline, or abandon the art of war. Do with me according to your custom."

"We have no custom in this regard," replied Judas. "It is not our wont to take prisoners. But I will imitate a custom of your own service, hard and cruel though it often is. With the Greeks the captive is the spoil of his captor, to kill, sell, or keep as his slave. Is it not so?"

"It is so," replied Agathocles.

"Then," said Judas, "Captain Dion, do with this man what you will. He is your prisoner."

There was a murmur of dissent from the crowd. Judas walked away. He picked up the rusted discus, and flung it ringing along the pavement until it turned upon its edge and rolled out of sight down the slope of Ophel.

"Humph!" ejaculated Jonathan, as he watched him. "He has been fighting with himself to-day, Simon, and as usual he got the worst of it. Well, Judas is the only man that can conquer Judas, thank the Lord!"

"But why," said Simon, "should Judas be an enemy to himself? There are surely enough other foes for him, without his throwing away his own interests. He has put a scorpion into his sandal in sparing these Greeks. If your surmise about Deborah and Dion be correct, he would better have made way with them both."

"If my surmise be correct," replied Jonathan, "making way with Dion would not make way for Judas with a woman like the daughter of Elkiah."

Judas on leaving Ophel strode through the Cheese-

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makers' Street, turned into the Street of David, and went to the house of Elkiah.

Deborah was pale as one worn with some great care or long watching. Judas scarcely noted this. Indeed, he forgot the usual formality of salutation as he was admitted into her presence, but burst through the curtained doorway, his big voice ringing out the news like a trumpet announcing victory.

"Dion is not a traitor! He is exonerated!"

He grasped both her hands in the eagerness with which he told the turn of affairs. Her beaming gratification led him to more enthusiasm.

"Agathocles is like Dion. Though in a Greek, good blood will tell. It is like a spring in a muddy lake."

"But tell me more of the evidence in his favor," she asked. "The circumstances surely seemed against Dion. Everybody condemned him. Tell me everything. How was it proved that there was no collusion between the father and son? Who testified for them?"

"Why, nobody testified on their side," said Judas, as if the need of such testimony had occurred to him for the first time. "My brothers were for condemning them both."

"And you had secret knowledge of their innocence?"

"None—and yet, Deborah, there were two things which persuaded me. The one was the bearing of the men. I cannot weigh arguments, but I know men. Goodness, honesty, honor—I feel these things in men. I have never been betrayed where I have given my confidence. Sincerity is like sunshine; it is its own evidence."

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"True; and the other thing which persuaded you to Dion's innocence?" she asked.

Judas mused for a while; then he said:

"Dion had an advocate."

"Who?" exclaimed she. "I thought all were against him."

"Not all, Deborah. As I sat there to judge, you yourself seemed to stand before me. You said, 'I have trusted this man; and will trust him. One who has done such things for my father's house cannot be untrue to any one or to any cause.' And, Deborah, you won your case—as you always do with me."

"Judas," replied she, "God is in this matter. I was with you, though I knew it not. I was in prayer. I used the very words you have just spoken. I said, 'O Lord, I have trusted this man. One who has done such things for my father's house cannot be untrue.' I prayed that Heaven would send his vindication."

"Deborah," replied Judas, "are we two so near to each other that soul speaks to soul without words?"

"God is near to us both, Judas. This I know. He leads me, and He leads you, as He leads all men by you. And what think you, my brother—for such, and father, too, you are to me—is not God near to some Gentiles—to Dion? He has given this man our faith, our spirit of sacrifice, though he is separated from us in blood."

The conversation was broken into by a loud outcry in the court, which rang through the house and seemed to fall back again in shatters out of the sky.

"Dion's free! Dion's free!"

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It was Meph. The only check to the lad's joy was the fact that he was not the first to bring the tidings, as he supposed he was—and rightly, from the way he had exercised his crutch in getting over from Ophel. His disappointment was only partially mitigated by the fact that he had been outstripped as a herald by no one except the great Judas himself.

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XLVI

DISENTANGLED THREADS

AS Dion and Agathocles went their way from the trial scene on Ophel, they narrated to each other the events of the score of years of their separation.

During Dion's childhood the war between Macedonia and Rome was in progress. General Agathocles had been commissioned by King Philip to proceed to Italy, and there, if possible, negotiate terms of peace. During his journey he was set upon by bandits, his credentials from the King stolen with his baggage. Entering Roman territory he was seized by the military authorities, who had been warned of his coming as a Macedonian spy; and, having no documents to disprove the charge, he was sentenced to the life of a quarry slave in one of the many isles which the blustering Republic was constantly adding to its domains. Here he remained for a score of years, until the overthrow of Philip's ill-fated son, Perseus, at the battle of Pydna, made Macedonia no longer a menace to Roman dictation over the entire country between the Adriatic and Ægean. Since the veteran warrior was supposed to have no longer cause in which to draw his sword, it was restored to his hand.

But the years of his degradation and cruel maltreatment had grown in the gallant man such hatred of Rome that he quickly sought an occasion in which to display it.

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At his liberation Greece was helpless at the Roman's feet, but the kindred Greek monarchy of Syria presented itself as an obstacle to further conquest of the republic in the east. Agathocles therefore hastened to offer his service to Antiochus.

Had not this political motive actuated the old warrior, a more tender incentive would have been sufficient for his joining the Syrians. In Macedonia he learned that Dion was still living, and that he had joined the army of Antiochus. Agathocles soon traced his son to the forces operating against Palestine; and, after campaigning for awhile in Persia and Cœle-Syria, he secured his own transference to the army under Lycias. This Governor hailed the old soldier, whose reputation had survived the years of his supposed death, and gave him command of a Macedonian contingent.

"But how came you, Dion, to join with these Jews?"

"My father, I have never forgotten the words you spoke to me when a child—though your face and form had faded from my memory. You taught me always to hate a tyrant. Then Rome was the taskmaster of Macedonia. In hatred of Rome I gave my sword to Antiochus just as you did. In my ignorance I imagined that he might some day come to be the avenger of our country's disgrace. But Antiochus is himself a monster, such as even Italy cannot breed. In his army here I found myself a tool of an atrocious despot. Father, it was because I am son of an Agathocles that I gave myself to these poor people who are defending their land, their homes, their altars, from this ravening beast."

"Had you no other thought, my son?"

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"Not at first," said Dion, "but I have since learned to believe in the religion of these people. They worship with sincerity. We are hypocrites. What Greek would shed a tear if his carved god were taken away? But these Jews bleed at the heart for the sacrilege Antiochus offers in Jerusalem. I have seen old men drop dead beside their desecrated altars—dead from the shock of their grief at the dishonoring of their God. I have seen others die with such tranquillity of mind amid outward torture that I could not but believe that their souls were drawn from their bodies by the kiss of the divinity they prayed to. Father, I have seen peasants who had never practised foil or been in a battle, suddenly gifted with skill to overthrow the armies of Apollonius and Seron and Gorgias and Lycias. What is the meaning of such things as you and I saw at Bethzur, but that this Judas hurls the very bolts of Jove or of his Jehovah of Hosts, as the people call their God? I have seen a woman of the Jews, a mere girl in years, do deeds such as are scarcely invented in our stories. She is possessed of more wisdom in council than a tentful of our Generals. She believes that her God helps her—and so do I."

"Is she a beautiful woman?" queried Agathocles, with a knowing glance at his companion.

"Aye, the fairest of women, father. Pygmalion would have thrown away his chisel if he had seen the daughter of Elkiah."

"I do not doubt it, since my Dion has evidently thrown away his Greek sword for her sake."

"Not for her sake, father; but for the sake of a cause which produces such a woman and such men, such faith and such heroism."

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"And such beauty. Eh, my boy? Have I not been young? Dion, you are in love with this woman, up to your eyebrows, and therefore can see nothing except through her shape. The mists on the shore make pebbles look like castles, so the witchery of this beauty magnifies everything Jewish. Hush, boy! I know it. I have been as young as you."

Both lapsed into silence, except for an occasional ejaculation from Agathocles: "A Jewess! Well, why not? One must love something."

Was the old soldier merely tantalizing the young man, or was he voyaging over the seas of memory? At length he put his hand upon Dion's shoulder.

"This Jewess, my boy; is she very fair? Is she like the picture of your mother?"

"No, father; she is very different. Yet in soul they must be like; for surely the gods—surely the Lord could not make two so faultless without repeating the model."

"And she a Jewess! Well! well!"

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XLVII

A QUEEN OF ISRAEL?

HE victory at Bethzur betokened a lengthened peace, for campaigns in other parts of his wide empire were absorbing the mind and resources of Antiochus. Judas took the opportunity to renovate Jerusalem as befitted the capital of the new nation. The immense spoils of recent victories went far toward providing means for refurnishing the Temple and palace; while the repute of Judas brought him such offered alliances as assured the safety and growing importance of his rule.

Some would have installed the hero in the office of High Priest, and thus combined all civil and religious authority in the one person. To this he would give no ear. The multitude hailed him with the title of King. This also he repudiated, saying, "I am not of the house of David, and none but the predicted One shall come to His throne." But no disclaimer on his part could prevent the enthusiastic huzzas when he passed along the streets or visited the camps on the hillsides. At times the word "Messiah" was heard. It never failed to bring such rebuke that the same lips dared not repeat the acclaim. The people after a time acquired the habit of greeting him with silent obeisance, for they knew that his great heart was hurt rather than elated by their praise.

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Yet ambition was not foreign to the soul of Judas Maccabæus. If God had given him power, was he not to use it? If Israel was again resplendent, should not the chieftain of Israel wear the dignity? One thing he saw with special clearness—it was that authority must be centralized and compactly knit if it were to endure the fraying of factions; and, further, that it must be perpetuated in orderly descent if it were to outlive the generation which created it.

This latter consideration, that of an hereditary leadership, was incessantly urged by his brethren. At length Judas gave signs of yielding to their importunities.

"I see it," said he. "The rule of new Israel must descend from father to son. Then let Simon be King, or Jonathan."

"We dare not," replied Simon. "While Judas lives it were blasphemy to speak another name. The sword of the Lord is the sword of Judas. That Israel and its enemies know full well. King Judas!" cried he, waving his sword.

Every sword in the little circle was uplifted, while a reverent "Amen!" went round.

"I want no such thing as a crown," said Judas.

"Nor," rejoined Jonathan, "did you want to lead us in the field. For how many moons did you refuse to command, until it was clear that the people would follow none other? Judas is brave; but not Judas himself dare fight against the will of heaven."

"Well! A King! What then?" replied he after a pause.

"To marry. To found the Maccabæan dynasty," said Simon, glancing for approval around the circle.

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Judas seemed staggered by the burden which was being bound upon him.

"Let him alone awhile," suggested Simon. "He sees the necessity, and will conquer himself in this as in other matters."

The day following Judas went to the house of Elkiah.

Long time he and Deborah conversed about the new hopes of Israel. Judas told of the embassage he was sending to Rome, of the service General Agathocles might render in Egypt, where the veteran was favorably known and where the age-long jealousy of the Ptolemies against the Seleucidæ was always ready to burst into hostilities. They spoke together with pious enthusiasm of the restored glory of the Temple, and the restitution of the ancient dignity of the priesthood.

The clouds were for the time lifted from the brow of the champion. Deborah noted the change. She had never thought of her friend as of prepossessing appearance; but now his strong and rugged features grew softer. There was a boyishness in his tone and manner which better suited his years than they did his experiences of exploit and care. She began to regard him as handsome. Deborah, in her modesty, as little suspected the cause of this transformation in her guest as the sun is conscious of his agency in brightening the objects he shines upon.

"The Lord has blessed me in two respects especially," said Judas, giving free rein to speech and feeling. "The spirit of our father, Mattathias, has been given to my brethren, any one of the four being fitted to take up the leadership if I should lay it down. With Simon to counsel, and Jonathan to

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plan, and Eliezar and John to strike, I am like one with four right arms. And, Deborah, God has given me your companionship. Without that I should have lost heart."

"Your words give me great joy," replied she, "for during these terrible years I have had one prayer deeper than all others—it has been for you; and that I might, however humbly, cheer and sustain you as became a daughter of Israel."

"And you will continue your sweet and helpful ministry, will you not?" he asked eagerly. "In this day of our prosperity I shall need you even more than in the past. I am accustomed to war; I have become, perhaps, too self-reliant there. But I know not how to organize peace. My hands are too hard for anything but swinging the sword. Alas! as Solomon said on coming to his throne, 'I am as a little child, and know not how to go out or come in.' Deborah, promise me that you will still——"

She interrupted him with eager, almost passionate, remonstrance: "Promise you? Judas, do I need to promise you anything? Do you not know that your own heart is not truer to our cause than mine is to you? If Judas should doubt me, it would kill me. Tell me some desperate venture by which I can prove my loyalty. Test me, I beg you."

"Some desperate venture? I know of one that will test us both. It is so desperate that I hesitate to speak it to the bravest woman of all Jewry."

What sublime audacity there was in her tone as she replied: "If the champion of Israel is afraid, let him not speak it. But know that the daughter of Elkiah dares to hear and to do whatever Judas may think."

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"Such words would make any coward brave," replied he. "Deborah, the Jews would make me King."

"A King! Why not? You are already the King, by right of sword, by right of your people's love, and, if Heaven's will ever had reflection from earth, by the will of our God."

"You believe in me overmuch, Deborah."

"No! no!" she responded eagerly, "but Judas has this one great weakness, that he will not believe in himself. Can you not see that Israel must have a King, and that there is but one head on which the people will allow a crown to rest?"

"But, Deborah, I could not endure such an honor and such responsibility—alone. Will you share the venture with me? Will the Daughter of Jerusalem be its Queen?"

Deborah started as if he had struck her. The flush on her face became deathly pallor. She trembled as the most timid girl might have done before her captor in war.

"Forgive me, Deborah. I was too rude in testing your loyalty."

The blood came back to her cheeks. "Loyalty! Say not that word. Let Maccabæus as King command me, and I will die at his feet. But——"

She sat upon the couch and burst into tears.

"Forgive me! Forgive me!" he cried. "What have I said? I was blind and stupid. Loyalty? Loyalty I know is not love."

After a moment's silence she said: "Judas, we are both speaking we know not what. I, too, am but a child, and know not the way of my own thoughts. Do not take offence, my dear friend; but I

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would be alone. Pray for me. And I will pray for you, as I have always prayed—one prayer for us both. God will give us light."

"Your will shall be mine," he responded, but his manner betokened a struggle for submission such as no one had ever before seen in this strongest of men. He stood with bowed head. "We are but two children lost in the woods. God forbid that we must now find our way by different paths."

He went away.

Deborah remained for a long time in the spot where Judas left her.

"A Queen! A Queen of Israel! The Queen of the most kingly of men, though he were uncrowned!" What problems of political import were thus thrust upon her! What tides of ambition swept over her! The highest, deepest, purest ambition. She grew dizzy with the confusion of her thoughts. Their very weight seemed to paralyze her brain. She ceased to think, and sat down like one distraught.

At length her mind, rested by its brief vacuity, began again its working.

"A Queen!"

She dismissed this consideration; for, momentous as was the destiny it involved, there was something else that appealed more urgently for decision. She was a woman. To her a throne seemed but a passing circumstance. There was a deeper issue.

"Love is the abiding thing. Can I be—the wife of Judas? Could this man, noble as he is, possess my life, my soul? Is admiration, or even reverence and self-sacrificing devotion—is this love? Or does the soul have depths as well as heights; and does worshipful regard dwell on the heights, and love

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in the depths, so that they may be utterly remote from each other, indeed, antagonistic? Dion is not comparable with Judas. Judas is on the heights; nothing higher, save God Himself. But Dion—he has his place, too; but where?"

She now remembered that the beginning of Gideon ben Sirach's story, which had so nearly made a Jew of the Greek, started in her a glow of happiness, and that she had felt a strange disappointment at its conclusion, which still left him a Greek. What did this experience mean? Did she really love this alien? As one of foreign blood he could never come into her life. The laws of her people, especially as interpreted by the Jewish purists, would forbid such a thing as marriage with him. She had been taught this doctrine by her father. It was one of the underlying occasions of the war. The Maccabæans regarded pure blood as next to the purity of worship.

So she said, "Dion cannot come into my life."

Then, having settled the matter so far, she thought of Judas:

"What other woman of Israel would presume to decline such a proposal? And who am I to set an example of conceit?

"The Queen of Israel!"

Deborah felt the flush of womanly pride mantle her face. It was a moment when almost any other woman would have turned first to her mirror, and then dropped upon her knees to thank God.

But even as she framed the image of the popular hero within the thought of her personal possession of him, the figure of the Greek intruded itself into the picture. His image was in the background,

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it is true; but there it was, nevertheless. She could not help following him with the eyes of her fancy. Was not Dion's soul as fine-fibred as that of Judas?

Judas had sublime faith; but this he had inherited from his fathers. It was wrought through and through his nature by training in the Law since childhood. But Dion now had the same faith. And this he had himself acquired, without gift of birth, education, or circumstance. Is it not even nobler to force one's mind through a thousand errors to the truth than to have the truth born in one, to discover one's pearl after delving the seas for it, than to find it in one's ancestral treasure-box?

Judas had risked his life for the cause of Israel. But had not Dion done as much in abandoning what seemed to him all the good of life in order to cast in his lot with the people of God?

Perhaps Deborah did not deliberately and of intent carry on this comparison. The thought of the Greek came into her mind of itself. She drove it out as she would have frightened a sparrow away from the lattice.

She then indulged the reminiscence of the various ways in which, since she had dedicated her life to her country, she had been useful to Judas. She did not doubt, even in her humility, that he spoke honestly when he said that he needed her. But the sparrow came back to the lattice. Had not God also led her to help this Greek to his better faith? And did not he need her?

She drove the sparrow away. She said that it should never come again. But, even as she said so, the sparrow twittered at the lattice.

She became puzzled with her question, "Why can

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I only by positive effort exclude this man from my mind? Why are his face, and form, and accents, and traits, and offered love always with me? Why does he press upon me as the daylight against the window, to be excluded only by drawing close the curtain?"

She had often observed a spring in the meadow, which the herdsmen tried to fill up and destroy; yet it broke out again, because its veins were deep and full beneath the earth. Was there such a spring of love for the Greek in her heart?

Then her problem became one of casuistry. Would it be right for her to give herself to Judas when she could not exclude another man from her thoughts, though he could not come into her life? Would not that be essential meretriciousness?

She had schooled herself to the habit of quick decision. So now she would pronounce judgment. Judges on the bench sometimes grow pale when they realize the immense consequences of their renderings; so Deborah, rapidly as her mind worked, passed an hour in a tragedy. She rose from the controversy strangely unnerved, until she steadied herself with her indomitable will. She stood out in the light that came through the latticed window, streaming in the last ray of the sunset. She hesitated to say the fateful words, which she knew must not be recalled, for she could not endure a repetition of the debate. Her face was uplifted to the sun-gleam; her hands tightly clenched behind her back—just her attitude, she remembered, when she made up her mind to become a spy three years ago, there in the ravine by the Fort of the Rocks. Her lips moved. Her words came heavy and cold, as if

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she had been changed from a living woman into a speaking statue:

"The Greek cannot come into my life. Nor—can—my—life—enter—into—that—of—Judas. God help me!"

She threw herself upon the divan, and the sun went down.

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XLVIII

A BROKEN SENTENCE FINISHED

GENERAL AGATHOCLES recognized the magnanimity of Judas in granting him the alternative of remaining in Jerusalem under the honorable guard of Dion, or of joining his own people. He chose the latter course. Yet from day to day he postponed his departure. It was whispered that his fatherly affection and authority would ultimately win back his son from his Jewish allegiance; but a few, among them Jonathan, shook their heads at this.

At length the General must take up his journey.

"My son, it may be—but the gods forbid it—that we shall not meet again. I would always keep you in my mind as in a mirror. It will not be enough that I learn of your welfare, and your doings; I would make your very thoughts my own, and so live within your life, be it glad or sorrowful. You have revealed to me that much of your thought will be given to this woman you have learned to love. May she prove all that your partiality has dreamed her to be! But beware! We do not love our ideal, so much as we idealize what we love. I would see this woman, so that I may know more of yourself, since it is evident that her image moulds itself in you as a seal in wax. If I can see her, I will more plainly see you."

Together they sought the house of Elkiah. The

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outer door being ajar they entered the court without announcement, and without being observed by the actors in a scene at the moment transpiring. Dion would have advanced, but Agathocles laid his hand upon his arm and detained him.

The fountain statue of Aphrodite had been removed. The water shot up as of old in a thin shaft, and fell in spray upon the surface of the broad lower basin, glistening like the dust of gold in the morning sunshine. Beside the fountain in a great chair sat Gideon ben Sirach. Deborah was with him. The old man's eyes seemed enchanted by the play of the sparkling water. He extended his hands and clutched as if to hold the warmth of the sun that fell upon them. His features were drawn out of shape by the palsy. Dion thought of a house from which the occupant is about to remove, its furniture displaced, much of it already gone; for Sirach's face was empty of the old expression of his soul. It was evident that much of the meaning of his life, the furniture of his mind, had been removed even from his memory. Deborah sat upon a little bench, where Sirach's feet also rested. She took his withered hands, and rubbed them as if to impart to them some of her own vitality.

"You can hear to-day, Gideon?"

His eyes turned toward her, but his features were as immobile as a death-mask.

"You have no pain, Gideon? And God's own peace is with you? Yes, I can read it in your eyes. Judas is now lord of Jerusalem; do you understand? He bids me say that your master's property shall be sacredly kept until its rightful owner comes home. He and I will seek him. You hear, and understand?

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Gideon, you are an old man, and near to the life of the blessed. Let me put your hands upon my head, that the daughter of Elkiah may have the blessing of her father's friend. Here, by this very fountain, my father and your master have often sat in the years that are gone."

She bowed her head, and lifted Sirach's thin white fingers to her black hair. So white were they that they seemed like points of light, radiating the blessing they would impart.

Agathocles whispered to Dion: "Come away! This is no place for a stranger.'

They walked far down the street before either of them spoke. At length Dion awoke his father from his reverie.

"You have seen her, father."

"There was never but one fairer woman," replied Agathocles. "Dion, with such a woman to love you, I could leave you willingly in Jerusalem or in the desert. Does she give you her favor? If so, here abide. If she will not love you, Dion, flee; flee with me—to the wars, over the seas, anywhere; and pray that the gods give you every day a drink from Lethe's waters of forgetfulness. That woman, my boy, will fill a man's heart or break it. Does she love you?"

"I would that I knew, father."

"Then find out, and at once. If so, stay here. Become a Jew, an Arab, or what she bids you. Her answer will make Jerusalem either Elysium or Tartarus for you."

"But," replied Dion, "I would that you knew her. I may not tell her that my father left the city without caring to speak a word with her. Though she

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love me not, I have been too intimate in the house of Elkiah for so unkindly a departure."

"It shall be as you say," replied the General. "What women these Jews have! Dion—but no—I will not say it; for what slips down from the lips never climbs back again. Let us go again to the house of Elkiah. An old Greek never loses his gallantry. If your heart fails you, Dion, I will pay my own homage at her feet. Does that prick you? Come."

When they re-entered the court, Deborah had risen. She stood by the chair, holding Sirach's hands and gazing closely into his eyes. Hearing footsteps, and supposing them to be those of the servants, she did not turn to look, but cried:

"Quick! Help! Sirach is stricken. See! His eyes do not follow one. I fear he is dead. Sirach! Gideon! Alas, he does not hear."

The two men drew near. Deborah, absorbed with the face that was growing rigid, and with the hands that were becoming as lead in her grasp, did not recognize the visitors. Agathocles startled her. Forgetting that he was a stranger, and caught by sudden emotion, he exclaimed:

"By all the gods! It is Sirach, servant of Shattuck! How came this man here? Dion, tell me, knew you this man?"

Then, the first surprise past, the General made his obeisance to Deborah, as Dion announced his name:

"My father, General Agathocles, begs to salute the daughter of Elkiah before he leaves the city."

Deborah rose. The gracefulness of her courtesy as she recognized her visitors matched her beauty.

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The Greek afterward said it was as fitting as the light is to the flame which emits it.

"You are welcome to our home, sir, both for your own sake and the sake of Dion. But do you know this good man whom God has just taken from us?"

"I knew him," replied the Greek, bowing beside the stiffening form. "I knew Gideon ben Sirach. And aye for a good man too."

He raised the deformed arm of the dead man, and pressed it to his lips. He drew up Sirach's loose sleeve, and looked long upon a terrible scar that lay among the shrivelled muscles. Then, speaking to himself, seemingly unaware that he was uttering his thoughts aloud:

"To this poor hand, good Gideon, do I not owe more than to any other, living or dead? These arms brought me my greatest treasure—the only treasure I would live for, or die for."

Then, raising his face as if to discern the spirit of Sirach hovering above his body, as it was believed by many in that age that newly departed spirits were loath to venture suddenly out upon the great unknown journey, and remained for a while near to their former house of clay—he said:

"Gideon, let me speak the gratitude that I have longed these years to tell into your living ears. Sirach! Alas, I have found him too late. My thanks, good lady, to all in this house that such a man came to no want in his last days."

Agathocles noted the surprise upon his son's face, and, looking anxiously from one to another, asked:

"Did Sirach ever tell his story in this house?"

"We know his story," replied Deborah. "Never

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was man more faithful to man than this man has been."

Agathocles took from her words more than she had meant.

"O Gideon! Gideon! why were not your lips stricken dumb before they had uttered it?"

He shook the dead body in anger. "Gideon, you gave me my boy. Why did you steal him away from me?"

He turned back and paced the court in his excitement. Suddenly he stopped before Dion.

"Now I know why you would be a Jew. It was because you knew that you are one. But I swear by all the gods! I swear by the memory of my sweet Agnes! Dion, you are mine. Sirach lied to you. Believe him not. Dion, you are my boy."

He held the young man fast as he would some captive seeking to escape.

"And ever shall be yours, my father," replied Dion.

"Father? Say it again, Dion. That is a sweet word from your lips—sweet as were the kisses of your mother. Swear to me, Dion, that not even Gideon's story shall separate us."

"I swear it by Sirach's corpse that you are my father, and ever shall be."

"Well, then"—taking Dion's cheeks between his hands—"then believe Sirach. He has spoken the truth."

"But this is strange," replied the young man. "Gideon mentioned not your name, father. He told us a story of Ctesiphon, the friend of one Nahum."

"He spake not my name at all? He told you not

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that Agathocles was not your father? Then, Gideon, you were faithful to me. But why, now, did not those still lips open and check mine before they had uttered the fatal words? But let it be so, since Dion is still my own."

"But who, then, was Ctesiphon, father?"

Agathocles stood a moment in thought. He then took Dion's arm and led him away.

"Come, my boy; this is no place for us. Pardon me, my lady; let us not intrude these matters of our privacy. We will come again, and take part in honoring Sirach in his burial."

But what change had come over the fair woman? As the Greek had seen her sitting by the side of the dead man, he noted how pale she was within the hood of her raven hair; how Niobe-like was her attitude. Now she was transformed, radiant; the blood tingeing her cheeks like sunshine on snow. Her lips seemed to be about to utter some passionate cry. Her hand clasped that of Dion.

There was another who saw this tableau and knew its meaning. Judas Maccabæus had entered the court at the moment, and, as his custom was, without heralding. He paused by the entrance. He took in at a glance all the scene,—and saw also some things which were not outwardly acted. Noting that he had been unobserved, he went silently out, and with bowed head tramped along the Street of David, through the Cheesemakers' Street, and out to the Hill of Ophel, where he sat long upon a ruined coping of the Gymnasium, and gazed down the Valley of Kedron, and over the slopes of the mountains of the Wilderness. But, as Meph, who

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had followed him, said to a comrade, "Judas looked, but he saw nothing."

Deborah had led her visitors into a room adjacent to the court. Here Agathocles narrated that part of Sirach's story which the old servant's sudden infirmity, many days before, had cut short.

"Ctesiphon! Well did Sirach give him praise. It was Ctesiphon who dared to plead for the Jews before the raging Ptolemy. It was he who, when the elephants were about to trample the Jews in the arena, went in among them, and dragged Nahum away.

"Nahum's daughter, Sara, was at the time concealed at my house. I had loved my neighbor's child alway, though we were of different races. After King Ptolemy's rage had abated—thanks chiefly to Ctesiphon's influence with the King—the Jews often came to my house when they visited their kinsman Nahum. Thus I often saw your father, Shattuck. He was a princely fellow; of wondrous gentility; and withal as much shrewdness as any of his race. My money I left with him, sure of its proper usury. He soon won the affection of Sara, and they were betrothed and wedded according to their nation's custom. The coming of Sara's child, and the death of Shattuck, her husband, were near together. The attempt upon little Gershom's life led me to take Sara and her babe to my home. To better protect her from unknown enemies I brought her to Macedonia. There she became my wife. She took the name of Agnes for better concealment of her identity. Her child Gershom she consented to call Dion. But this is no place to open the memories of a broken heart."

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He rose to go away. Deborah besought him to remain.

"No, no!" he replied, and he passed into the street, leaving Dion to piece together the story as he might; or, if he cared, to begin his own life-story anew.

An hour later a horn sounded from the parapet of the house of Elkiah; for such was the custom of the Jews, that the passers-by might know that death was within the walls. They washed the body of Sirach, trimmed the hair and nails, and wrapped him in new white linen. They laid the form upon a bier. A rabbi came, and spoke words of eulogy over a faithful servant. Women entered the court, with dishevelled hair, and, to the accompaniment of flutes, chanted a weird mourning dirge, and cast dust of ashes toward the body.

About sunset a little procession emerged from the house. Ephraim would have taken the position of chief mourner, as befitted his condition at a fellow-servant's burial; but Agathocles displaced him, and walked nearest to the bier. Dion went by his side.

Thus they buried Gideon ben Sirach on the slope of the vale of Jehoshaphat, in the family tomb of the house of Shattuck—for so Dion, now Gershom ben Shattuck, ordered it to be.

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XLIX

THE HIDDEN HAND

ROM the burial of Gideon ben Sirach, Dion and Agathocles walked leisurely back toward the city. They had much to talk about, both of the past and future, and took a path less frequented than the common road.

Not far from the city gate stood a beggar. His filthy hair matted itself about his head, and fell upon his bare and begrimed shoulders. His chief garment might have been the remnant of a wine-skin, which was tied with strings about the upper part of his body. His legs and feet were bare—an advantage to such creatures, for his lower limbs at least would get a bath of air and sunshine, and that of an occasional shower. About his neck hung a basket which made its mute solicitation for alms.

"These fellows are as proud as priests," said Dion. "They will ask nothing of us, and will thank us for nothing we give."

"He poses like the statue of a god I once saw in Cyprus," commented Agathocles. "They had just dug it up out of the mud, and hadn't scraped it."

"Don't go near him," replied Dion. "His filth doubtless has wings. Yet it is well to give him a stater. He is supposed to mumble a blessing, and I need one."

Dion advanced toward the man, and put his hand

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into his bosom to draw his purse. The beggar sprang upon him with a cry of fury.

"At last I have you, you damned whelp of Shattuck!"

He drew a knife from beneath his dirty sheep-skin, and aimed a blow at the breast of Dion. The thrust had surely done its intended work, but for the quick evasion of the practised soldier. Before the wretch could repeat the blow Dion had closed with him, grasped the uplifted arm with his left hand, and with a dexterous wrench bent his assailant until his head and heels nearly touched; then laid him on the ground.

Agathocles started to help. He was instantly confronted by another person who darted from behind a great olive-tree. But the General had drawn his sword. The villain, though armed with a dagger, dared not venture the encounter. He turned to flee; but the weapon of Agathocles was through his body.

Dion stood a moment over the beggar he had felled.

"What madness is this?" he asked.

"Kill the wretch," cried Agathocles.

"Nay, father, my sword would not drink such foul blood."

They tied the wrists of the living man with the stout cords of his beggar's basket.

"Why this assault?" asked Dion. "Were you mad with hunger?"

"Aye, hunger for you," replied the man.

"Who are you?" asked Dion.

"The scar on your forehead knows me, if you do not. But for the man you have just buried, you had never had tongue to ask who I am."

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"I ought to know this man's face," said Agathocles, studying him closely. "For years I have seen these eyes, like those of a panther as it slinks away from one it dares not attack. In Alexandria, in Macedon, in Rome, I have seen these same eyes spying on me. Let me squeeze his secret out of him."

The General's hands were upon the man's throat.

"I am Cleon. Do you know me now?" gasped the wretch.

"Cleon? There was a Cleon in Alexandria, a vile procurer for the beastly Ptolemy. Yes, those eyes are Cleon's, as sure as ever snake owned his. But I never harmed you, Cleon. Why do you pursue me?"

"You lie!" wheezed the man. "You were always in my way. You call me a snake. Well! have you not both writhed when I bit you? You, Dion, have drunk my poison; and the great Agathocles was in the mines in Sicily, where I—I—Cleon sent him. I have had my vengeance. Now take yours."

"I see it all," said the General. "This Cleon, panderer to the vilest folk of Alexandria, was the agent of those who would have stolen the estate of Shattuck, but for the influence of Ctesiphon and myself, and the help of Gideon. It was Cleon's hand that struck you, Dion, when a babe; the mark of which blow Gideon carried to his grave. It was the same hand that mixed the poison for us both in Macedonia. It was this man's tongue, black with perjury, that gave the lying information against me to the Romans."

"Well, now you know me," said the man with assumed indifference, "you can only kill me."

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"Let us take him into the city," said Agathocles. "This man is so false that I can hardly believe his damning confession against himself without better evidence."

"Not into the city! Not into the city!" cried the captive. "Not into the city! For God's sake, kill me here."

He writhed, not seemingly to break his cord, but rather to wrest his soul from the grip of his own body, and thus escape from life ere some deeper curse should befall him.

"Not into the Holy City! Not near to the Temple! O God of Abraham! Mercy! Mercy! Not into the city!"

He raised his head, and, before his captors were aware of his purpose, he dashed it against a stone, as if to make an exit for the spirit that felt itself being consigned to perdition.

"Ah, Cleon," said Dion, "there is a worse poison than you have mixed for us; poison that no medicine will purge from the blood. You have swallowed your own memories, and they grip hard, do they? But why should you pray to the God of the Jews? Such a scoundrel as you cannot be Jew."

The man's response was a compound of the most dreadful oaths and vilest expletives known to the tongues of Jew or Greek.

"You tempt me to kill you," said Agathocles; "but that might end your misery. We will let you live. If you dread the Temple, then to the Temple you shall go."

The commotion had drawn a crowd. Among them was Ephraim, the old servant of Elkiah. He at once identified Cleon as a Jew who in his youth

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had been driven from Jerusalem by the libertine set of young men, as one infected with vices which were too fetid for even their debauched tastes. One of his unconscionable pranks had been the defiling of some of the sacred vessels of the Temple—which doubtless accounted for his dread of dying near the holy precincts. In Alexandria—so Ephraim had heard—he had been refused admission to the Synagogue, and had openly apostatized, assuming the Greek name of Cleon instead of his own, Naaman.

The dead accomplice of the false beggar could not be identified. He was clearly not a Jew. On his body were found several letters written in Aramaic, the common language of Syria and adjacent countries. One of these read as follows:

"More money? Not an obole until your job is finished. We cannot depend upon the fool Cleon. Go with him. Stick to his heels. He cannot be trusted by himself. Ben Shattuck is in Jerusalem. He is called Dion,—a captain once in the Greek guard. But he has scented out his own Jewish blood, and will go back to it, like a dog to his vomit. Send proof that you have executed your business with him, or, by the tail of Satan, I will have you accused of the crimes you have already committed."

This letter was unsigned.

"I should know that writing," said Dion. "It is none other than that of Menelaos."

"The same, no doubt," said Ephraim, studying it carefully. "I could tell you more of that Priest than has yet been published. But bring not this reprobate into the city. Maccabæus is cleansing the place, and would not abide such foulness. My counsel is that you deal with him here."

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"Leave him to us," shouted the crowd.

In spite of Dion's remonstrance they tied the living man to the body of his dead confederate, and carried them both down to the Valley of Hinnom.

What things were there done may not be written.

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L

THE VENGEANCE OF JUDAS

IT required no especial acuteness on the part of Judas to discern the meaning of that tableau he had witnessed in the court of Elkiah's house, when Deborah stood hand in hand with Dion. It was clearly as significant to him as the fabled scene in which Eros awakens Psyche with a kiss would have been to Agathocles. He had also overheard enough of the General's story to discover that, if Dion were his rival for the affection of Deborah, he himself, though of the blood of Mattathias, which had been kept pure from foreign taint through all generations, had in this respect no advantage over his competitor. As Gershom ben Shattuck, Dion could satisfy the strictest interpreter of the Law. The Prophet Nehemiah himself could have found no flaw in Shattuck's line, with all that Reformer's zealotry against mixed marriages.

Strong man that Judas was, the keen eyes of Meph, who had watched him as he came out of Elkiah's doorway that day, noted that the giant staggered a little, just for an instant. Others remarked that the great man seemed unusually absorbed with his own thoughts, and did not return their salutation as was his custom.

"A big raid, doubtless, to clean out the tribesmen

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from around Hebron; or a campaign in the direction of Antioch itself," a captain of the guard was overheard to say.

"Or something as momentous," was the reply of a comrade, "for it takes a heavy project to press Judas' head that far down upon his shoulders."

Judas shut himself up in his private chamber.

The building and the great court before the old palace on Sion were thronged with people. Many of these had been especially summoned by the Messiah Malhamah, the "Anointed for War," as the nation were content to call their leader until such time as he was disposed to take the crown. Here thronged priests, some greatly renowned for wisdom and piety, but who had been long in hiding. They came wearing the rich robes of their office which they had treasured with their lives; though some of these were in ragged semblance of their former estate, having lost everything while they were enrolled in the patriot army. There were also in the crowd learned rabbis, who had been summoned to give their counsel regarding the reorganization of the state, restoring the Temple and reordering the grades of priests according to the ancient ritual. The bravest of the captains were there, for Judas had announced his intention of widening the scope of army operations, since he foresaw that the defence of Judea depended upon the possession of far larger areas of territory on every side.

Hours passed, and Judas did not appear, to meet those whom he had summoned.

Simon and Jonathan at length ventured into his presence. The champion sat by his table—an affair of ebony and gold, once the writing-desk of the

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Syrian commandant, now but a fragment of its former elegance. Its dilapidation was not out of keeping with the aspect of the man who leaned upon it. The powerful frame of Judas was bent as if he had lost some thought and was seeking to rediscover it somewhere amid the scratches on the ebony polish. He gave his guests no greeting. One might have imagined him a dead man but for the intent look upon his face, and that his clenched hand now and then beat upon the table.

The coming even of his brethren was an evident intrusion, and they withdrew.

"What now?" said Jonathan. "I have not seen our brother so distraught in his moodiness since the old days in the Fort of the Rocks. There was need of his brooding then, but not now when all things are coming our way, as when the quails were blown by the east wind and covered the land to feed our fathers in the desert."

"But have you not noted?" asked Simon, "how Judas comes out of his black clouds? He is always brighter afterward, and shows us something that none but he could have thought of. He will accept the kingship."

"Brother Simon," replied Jonathan, "I like not the look of Judas' face. He is not meditating as is his wont. He is struggling with some rage. I once before saw that same look on him. It was when he crushed the skull of a Greek spy who had got within our lines at Mizpah. A word in your ear, Simon."

"It will be as safe as under an altar."

"A man has crossed his path."

"Who?"

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"Dion."

"Faugh! A feather crossing the rush of a torrent! A partridge flitting through the lair of a lion! What cares Judas for the Greek?"

Jonathan took playfully the beard of Simon. "You are called the Wise; and yet methinks you are dull-witted. We have insisted that Judas should be King. That is well. But you have blocked the way of the project by insisting that he should marry the daughter of Elkiah. This, have I not said, he will never do."

"And you believe, Jonathan, that that Greek stands in his way?" replied Simon. "This I would not credit unless you should tell me that you yourself had caught them in dalliance."

Jonathan shrugged his shoulders. "Listen!" said he, "ears open and teeth tight, for I have never breathed this to living man before. The night before the battle in the Wady I followed her, for I feared that her daring would bring her to harm. I tracked her into the very camp of Apollonius. May the rising moon there shatter my wits forever if I speak not the truth! I saw this Dion come to her. I would have slain him and her. But when I drew to strike I overheard their words. I saw that she was stealing this man out of the fight, lest in the vengeance we were about to take on Apollonius he, too, should fall. She risked her life to give us the victory—that we know; and I know that she risked her life for this man at the same time. If ever woman loved a man, she loves him. I saw that she accepted his love from the touch of his lips."

Simon turned fiercely upon the speaker. "Jona-

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than, dare you impugn the loyalty of the daughter of Elkiah? She is not a Glaucon, though she has his blood."

"Her loyalty?" replied Jonathan. "I laud it. This woman is so true to us and our people that not even her love for this man made her swerve. And why should she not love the Greek? He is as good a fellow as any since the day when Father Abraham was himself a heathen in the land of the Chaldees. I have mingled much with the Greeks in Jerusalem without giving them a chance to cut my throat. I have been more than once, as you know, in this palace when Apollonius was its master. I have learned much of Dion from the lips of his fellows in camp and field. He was the pride of the Greek service; could have had high rank, but he risked it all for the safety of Deborah. He won her gratitude by saving her from foul dealing. I say, Jew that I am, Deborah ought to love Dion. And, further, I will say that Deborah ought not, and will not, marry Judas. It was not alone for the benefit of foreign alliance that I spoke of our brother seeking a wife from the courts of other nations; I foresaw that he could not marry within Judaism, since he would marry none save Deborah; and she is an impossibility, unless I know nothing of the soul of this woman. Now mark me further, my over-wise Simon. Did you not note that when Judas was brooding over the kingship he went to the house of Elkiah? And since his return he has been behind what you call his thunder-cloud. I tell you that when Judas' lightning flashes, it will not be with the light of statecraft, but against Dion. Judas, generous, self-yielding, patriotic, is one man;

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Judas in love is a different man. I would that the Greek were far away from Jerusalem."

Judas still sat by his table. The light faded in the high window beneath the cedar rafters of the great chamber. A star gleamed through the aperture, then floated on to look into a million other chambers where men and women sat with bowed heads or lay upon restless couches. The moon looked in, and hung her white veil on this wall of the chamber, and then on that, but evoked no response from Judas, except an occasional smile that relieved the harshness of his features.

By and by the sun rose. Jonathan came and saw him fast asleep with his head resting on his clasped hands. When his brother woke him, his face showed the marks of suffering. Years seemed to have put wrinkles about his eyes and mouth, as time cracks timber and lime walls and almost everything else. Why not a man's face?

Judas ate a little of the meal which the servants brought, responding only in briefest words to their questions. Then, as if a spring had uncoiled somewhere within his body, he suddenly rose.

"Brother Jonathan, bring the Captains here at the sixth hour—and the Priests at the ninth; for we have pressing business to-day."

Without another word he passed through the great doorway into the palace plaza, and thence into the street.

"What news?" asked a guard. "Maccabæus is as wrathful this morning as a starved lion. Are the Syrians marching again upon the city?"

"If not, then the devil has broken loose, and challenged our Goliath to fight. The Lord have mercy

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on the man he runs against this time! Look at him! The very stones shake under his feet."

Judas turned into a by-street. He stopped before a small building. He did not wait to have his heavy rap on the door answered from within, but entered, and went straight to a side chamber.

"Captain Dion!" he thundered out.

He was confronted by both Agathocles and Dion. The presence of the Greek General seemed to remind him of his forgotten courtesy.

"Your pardon, sirs! But I would talk to this man alone."

Agathocles withdrew, but not without a wondering glance at their unceremonious visitor and a look of inquiry at Dion, who, however, was as amazed as his companion.

When they were alone, and the door closed, Judas said:

"Dion, I once took your oath of allegiance at the gate."

"True. And the oath has not been broken," replied the young man, with some resentment in his tone excited by the apparent suspicion in Judas' abrupt manner.

In loud voice Judas exclaimed: "As Dion the Greek you have kept your oath; but that is no longer binding; for you are not Dion, but Gershom ben Shattuck. As a Jew you have sworn no allegiance."

"Do the Jews swear allegiance to their commander?" replied he. "Are we like the Romans? Is it not enough that our allegiance is to the Lord, who is over us all? Did Judas ever before ask an oath of any Jew to serve him?"

"From no other man," said Judas; "but from the

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son of Shattuck I would require it. The Jews would make me King of Jerusalem."

"And rightly," responded the other. "And to King Maccabæus I will swear to be loyal in everything that man should do for man."

Judas repeated his words, "'Everything that man should do for man.' A wise and well-turned oath. I like it. Shattuck, they would make Elkiah's daughter the Queen of Jerusalem."

Dion staggered as if the Maccabæan had smitten him. But he quickly recovered his self-possession. He spoke slowly:

"Maccabæus, I will swear loyalty to Elkiah's daughter as Queen,—when she shall ask it of me. But until she herself speaks that word no man, though he be Maccabæus, shall exact it from me. At her feet I will take the vow, but not under any man's hand. You have my answer."

Shattuck's form seemed swollen with his wrath until it matched that of the giant who confronted him. Judas looked at his challenger as a lion-tamer might have returned the wild glare of his beast which he knows must succumb to his own dominant will. Yet there was in his eyes the flicker as of a light that came from some deeper recess of his soul than that of his present passion. A smile quickly overspread his features. He laid his great hand on the shoulder of his competitor.

"Dion—Ben Shattuck—though I be King, as man to man, we stand on equal footing. Your challenge proves it. But, if you had sworn allegiance to me in putting the crown upon the head of Elkiah's daughter without her command, I would have felled you in your tracks. Here we stand—

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man and man; and that woman is the queen of us both. You have been her protector. I know all the story of these years. Protect her still from Greek and from Jew. I swear with you, Shattuck, that no will but her own shall be over her. Come with me to her."

The two men went together into the Street of David, and entered the house of Elkiah. As Deborah glanced from one to the other, Judas seized her hand and placed it in Dion's,

"The God of Israel bless you both!" he said.

Before they could find voice to reply Judas was gone.

As he came out into the street Meph met him with the great news.

"Dion is a Jew! Dion is a Jew! My old Sirach was right. Deborah herself told me. And, Judas, she was as glad as I was to find it out, almost."

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LI

A KING, INDEED

HEN Judas returned to his palace he found his brethren in waiting. Their manner told the anxiety with which they anticipated his decision of the momentous question of the kingship. Judas relieved them of the necessity of putting their thoughts into words.

"Do you still believe that I should be King?"

"It is the will of the nation," said Simon.

"And yours?"

"And ours," said all, making low obeisance.

"You swear me absolute obedience?"

"Obedience absolute. There can be no other sort of kingship."

One by one his brethren took his hand; then ranged in a circle about him. There was no need of a crown to give majesty to this man: his form towering; his face imperious; and around him the very atmosphere almost visibly radiant with the prestige of victories such as Heaven had never before given to man. Nor did his brethren need princely robing to make them feel due pride in this hour of the founding of the new Dynasty.

"I thank you, my brothers, worthy all of the blood of our father Mattathias. Hear, then, my command. I exact no vow, but trust your love to guard your loyalty."

"Our brother's word is our law," said Simon.

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"His word our law," went round the little circle.

"Gather close about me," said Judas.

Then lowering his voice: "This is my will. Let the word King never again be heard in our council. Nor let the daughter of Elkiah be spoken of except as the wife of Gershom ben Shattuck."

"Ben Shattuck!"

The exclamation burst vehemently from all lips.

Judas had no need to explain his words; for at the moment Meph's voice rang across the plaza:

"Dion is a Jew! Dion is a Jew! The son of Agathocles is the son of Shattuck."

Judas left little time for any to dispute his decision. His tremendous energy was imparted to every man about him. Priests were loaded with questions regarding their ancient customs, which absorbed their study day and night, for Judas would immediately reorganize their order according to the Aaronic ideal. Such artisans as were still to be found among the people, builders in stone, carvers of wood, and women skilled in needlework, were given their part in the problem of the renovation of the Temple. The city walls were to be strengthened, new citadels built in the surrounding villages, cordons of forts placed around the entire land, the army to be reorganized for more systematic defence, and new campaigns planned to effectually awe the surrounding tribesmen.

Every day saw the mark of the master-hand of their leader. The rubbish heaps outside the gates were ornamented with the shattered pieces of pagan statuary. The sacred courts on Mount Moriah were purged of every stain of the heathen Abomination.

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A new altar rose on the site of the ancient one. Its stones were untouched by chisel, only laid together symmetrically, as befitted a memorial to Him who created all things without the help of human hands. The stones of the ancient altar, which had been desecrated by the foul offerings of the Greeks, were laid away until the great Messiah should come.

The crowning act of Greek pollution had taken place three years before, on the twenty-fifth day of the month Chisleu, which corresponds with the Roman month of December. Judas appointed the same date for the Feast of Dedication, which has been annually repeated ever since throughout the Jewish world.

For eight days the streets of the city and all the highways leading to its gates from valley and hill were thronged with processions bearing palm branches, and shouting the old Hallel psalms. In many groups were those who had not touched hands for years; men who had come out of hiding-places where they had taken covert from the incessant persecution. Some came laden with their goods, making willing offerings of coins and jewels to swell the fund for the glorious work.

At each nightfall every house gleamed like a constellation with crowded lights in doorway and window, and on parapet and dome. The Temple plaza blazed with great fires which sent beams of hope far over the Judean hills, and by the glare in the sky proclaimed the triumph of Israel to the camps of the enemy beyond the borders.

One house outshone all other private dwellings on the third night of the Feast of Dedication. It stood near to the western gate, close by the Tower of

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David, with the city's breadth separating it from the Temple. The fires on the roof of this house saluted as with waving hands of flame the blazing glory of the Temple Mount. This was the old mansion of Shattuck, for years deserted, but now reoccupied by its new-found inheritor.

Between this house and that of Elkiah the streets were densely crowded on that third night. At the middle hour a cry rent the air:

"She comes! She comes!"

Close back against the houses the people were massed. There was no need of official command, for the populace was moved by a common gladness and reverence.

There was but one instance of what would have seemed to a stranger a breach of decorum. Down the street came Meph waving his crutch like the baton of a marshal, and shouting:

"Make way! Make way for the Daughter of Jerusalem! Way for the bride of Ben Shattuck!"

No one rebuked the lad, for the story of his part in bringing about the regeneration of the popular Greek into a Jew was well known. "Bless the boy!" was the only comment heard as his heels conducted both himself and the pageant that followed.

The procession was more artistically heralded by bands of players on flute and tabor, succeeded by those leading the multitude in the ancient marriage song of the people.

Amid a hundred torches was seen the gigantic form of Judas together with his brethren. For this hour at least all traces of solemnity and care were banished from his face, as he led the "friends of the bridegroom," who, according to the time-honored

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custom, were conducting the bride to the house of her husband.

As Deborah appeared surrounded by her maidens the cries, "Long live Judas Maccabæus!" were quickly changed.

"Joy! joy to the daughter of Elkiah! Long live Deborah, the Daughter of Jerusalem!" rang from a thousand lips.

The happy crowd hurried along as if impelled by their own huzzas, until the bride disappeared within the portal of the house of Shattuck.

* * * * * * * *

An hour later Judas sat alone in his chamber in the palace on Sion. The stars as they floated by looked through the high window, but did not disturb the soul which at that hour was moving through depths as profound as theirs. The gray dawn alone aroused him—in which there was a poetic propriety; for since the day-spring summons all nature to activity, why should it not awaken the tremendous forces of this great heart for its work in resurrecting a nation?

Judas reached out his hand and struck the bronze gong—the same that Apollonius had rung three years before when he was vanquished by the spirit of Deborah in this same hall.

"Call the Captains!"

His chief officers came with evidence of hasty toilet—for celerity never waited upon formality in the councils of Judas. His sentences, as he addressed them, were laconic, as if he assumed that his hearers had listened at his brain and already knew his thoughts.

"Friends, I learn that the men of Edom are mov-

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ing from their camps on the south. The tribesmen of the Jordan and beyond are preparing to strike us. Tyre and Sidon are enrolling their trained bands. Every man, then, in readiness by the turn of the moon!"

With a wave of his hand he dismissed them.

The result of this order belongs to history, which tells how the invincible men of Judas, beginning on the south, swung to east, then from east to north, then from north to west, and then from west to south again—the swing of the mighty Hammer of Israel—crushing a hostile tribe at every stroke, until Judah lay quiet within all its desolate borders.

No sword gleamed brighter in those days than that of Gershom ben Shattuck, and no foeman gave more desperate battle than Nadan, son of Yusef, Sheikh of Jericho.

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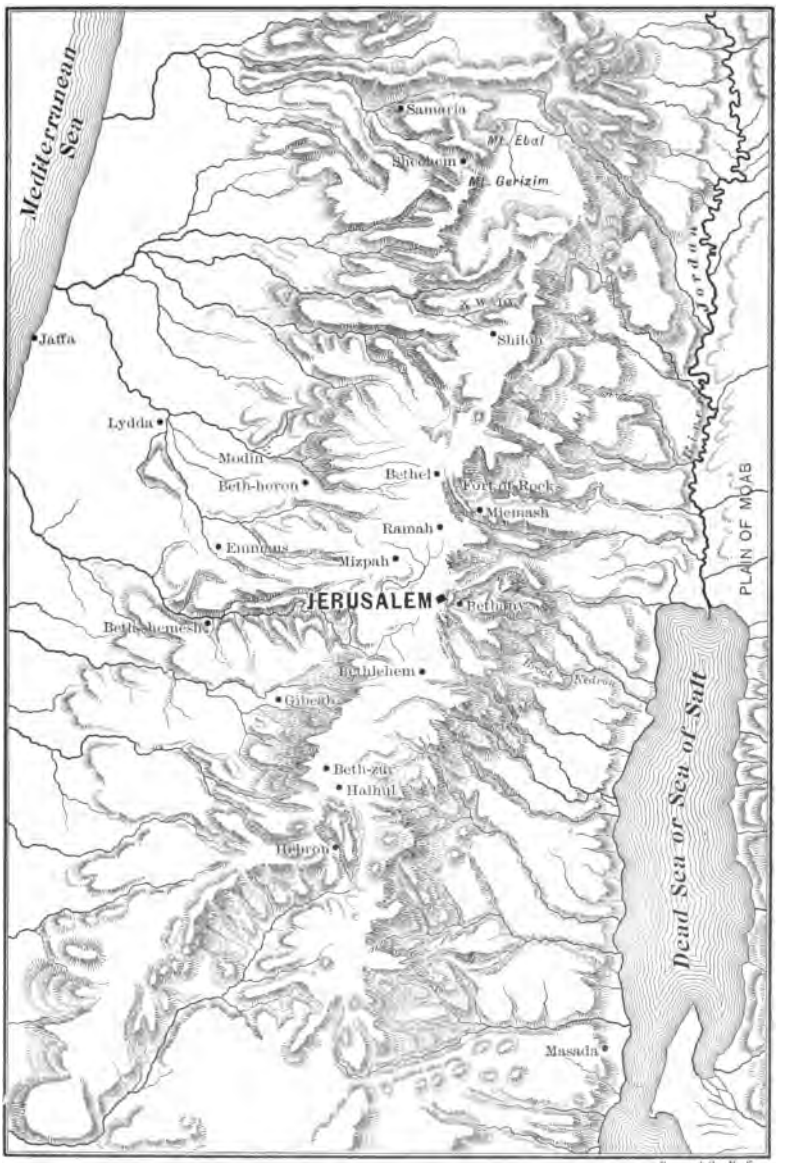

THE COUNTRY OF THE MACCABEES

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NOTE.—Judas fell in battle three years later. The still sceptreless rule was then taken by Jonathan, who, with the title of High Priest, consolidated the religious and secular orders, and laid wide and deep the foundation of the Asmonean power—a title taken from the family name of Mattathias, the father of the Maccabees. On the death of Jonathan, Simon the Wise accomplished his purpose of kingship for Israel, and crowned himself. In the seed of Simon the dynasty endured until the last diluted drops of Maccabæan blood drained from the veins of the Herods, and the eyes of the world were turned to one whom they called, not Messiah Malhamah, "The Anointed for War," but Christ, "The Prince of Peace."

For the descriptions of the battles of Judas mentioned in this book the writer has been compelled to supplement with his own imagination very meagre historic materials. The place of the fight with Apollonius (The Wady) is unidentified by chroniclers. The affair at Bethhoron follows only the general topography of the region. The stratagem of Judas at Emmaus is, however, well known, and was imitated by Bonaparte. The method of "The Hammer" at Bethzur cannot have differed greatly from that described. The result of all these battles is as historic as it was marvellous.

If injustice has been done to any of the real characters involved, Antiochus Epiphanes, Mattathias and his five sons, the priest Menelaos, or the various generals commanding the hosts overthrown by the heroic patriots, the writer is prepared to make the personal *amende honorable* if he should ever meet them in the shades.

For the other characters, Deborah and Dion, Caleb and Meph, it is sufficient to say that they are the children of his own fancy, over whom he exercises the ancient paternal right of absolute disposal. Of Glaucon and Clarissa, the report that Agathocles, on his return to Antioch, met them as the keepers of a wine shop near the bridge over the Orontes, is as true as were all the other declarations of that veracious Greek.

The student of the Maccabæan period may profitably consult the Books of the Maccabees in the Apocryphal Bible (for traditional accounts); "The Histories of Polybius" (for contemporaneous history of other nations); Prideaux's "Connections of Old and New Testaments" (for relation of Jews and Gentiles); Stanley's "Jewish Church," volume iii. (for summary of men and events); Conder's "Judas Maccabæus" (for topography); and Church's "The Hammer" (for local color, customs, etc.).

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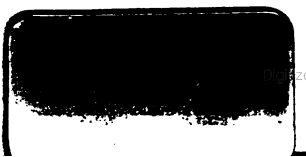

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